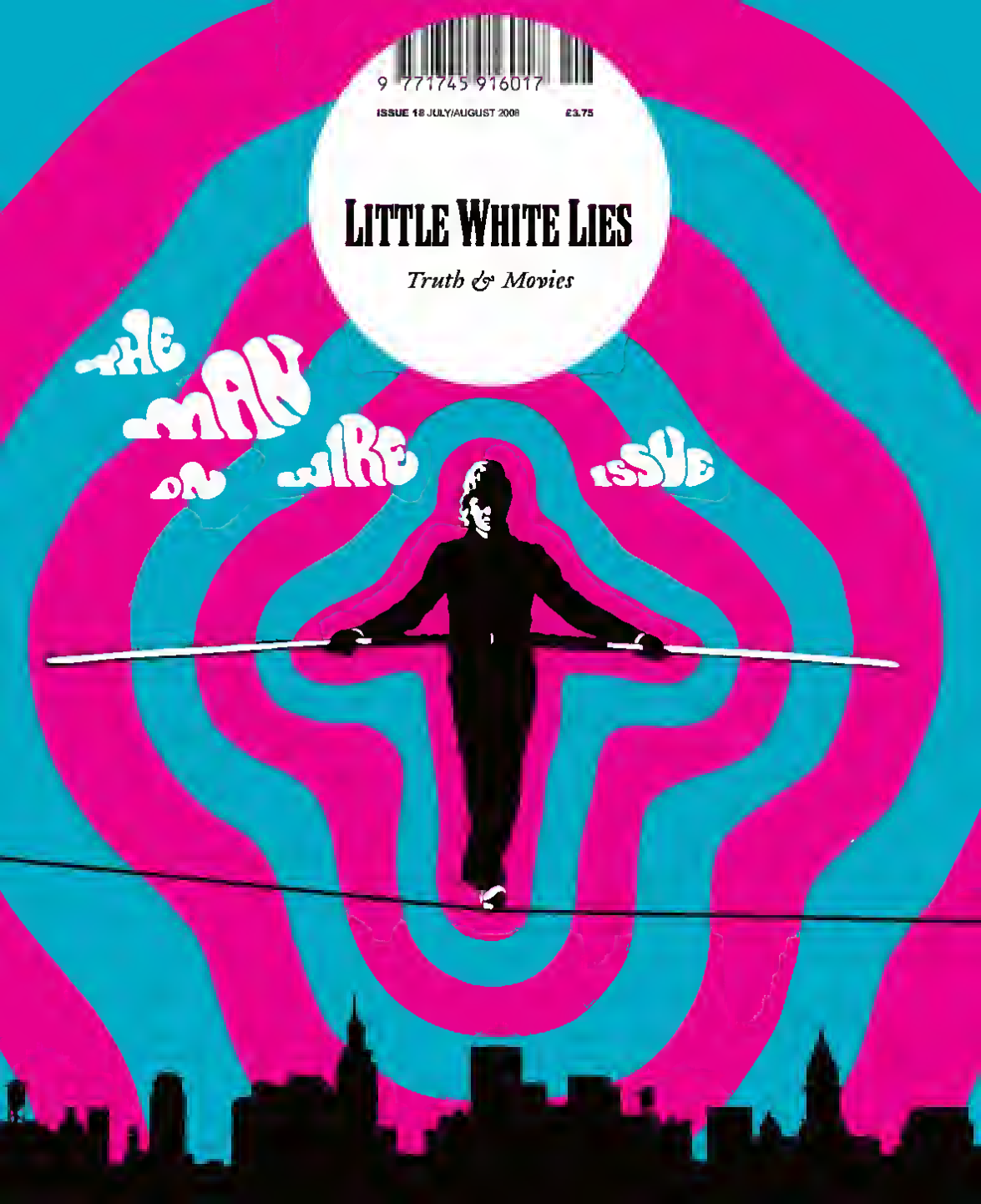
9 771745 916017

ISSUE 18 JULY/AUGUST 2008 £3.75

LITTLE WHITE LIES

Truth & Movies

THE MAN ON WIRE ISSUE





"MAYBE DEATH IS LOOKING THROUGH THE GOLDEN FRAME OF MY DREAM"

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY
PAUL WILLOUGHBY

WORDS BY
MATT BOCHENSKI


CHAPTER
ONE
IN WHICH WE
DISCUSS
MAN ON
WIRE

BEFORE THE FALL

THE MEMORY OF PHILIPPE PETIT'S WIRE-WALK ALLOWS THE TWIN TOWERS TO STAND TALL AGAIN IN JAMES MARSH'S STUNNING FILM



Because there was a man perched on a cable strung between the buildings dancing across the clouds like he'd taken flight. And there was a plane flying too low and too close before it disappeared turning that shining glass and steel to ruin.

James Marsh's *Man on Wire* may only be the story of one of those days, but it unquestionably recalls them both. To celebrate Philippe Petit's legendary wire walk of 1974 is to release our memory of the World Trade Center from the grip of 2001. James Marsh and Philippe Petit have reclaimed creation from destruction, and though *Man on Wire* may not breath a word about the events of 9/11, it is nonetheless an act of glorious defiance.

It is also a gripping story. In 1968, Philippe Petit was an 18 year old street artist living in Paris when he saw an advert for two towers that would soon be built in New York. Inspired, he began scheming with his friends to stage a unique wire walking performance. It was a daunting challenge: they would need to break into the towers with their equipment, make their way 110 floors up, get the cable from one tower to the next, rig it and, finally, walk it.



In a stroke of inspiration, Marsh has realised that Petit's story isn't your run of the-mill documentary; it's a heist movie – and he shoots it like one. Using a mixture of dramatic reconstructions, original material shot by the protagonists – as well as talking head interviews (with *Reservoir Dogs* style nicknames), *Man on Wire* explodes into life. Between Jinx Godfrey's editing and Marsh's crime-caper sensibility, the narrative unfolds with the suspense of detective fiction, emerging as a kind of gloriously oddball hybrid between Michael Mann and Ealing comedy.

At the centre of it all is Petit, an impish eccentric giving a command performance. If it's thanks to Marsh that the film has such dramatic sparkle, it's thanks to Petit that it has an ineffable charm. He's an irrepressible interviewee, lovingly reliving his moment of triumph.

He's a fascinating character – an artist who brought a sense of humanity to a monolithic landscape. But it *Man on Wire* has a weakness, it's Marsh's inability to pin him down and, perhaps, to hold him to account. In his own mind, Petit is a dramatic hero, but there are hints of monomania, selfishness and manipulation. He speaks ▼







of the World Trade Center as 'my tower', and the 'betrayal' of people who let him down. But it was Petit who committed the worst act of betrayal when he returned from the World Trade Center towers a global icon, only to cheat on his wife and ditch his friends. Marsh, seduced by Petit's own compelling sense of vision, lets him off the hook with some self-justifying bluster.

And yet Petit is seductive. Backed by excerpts from the work of composer Michael Nyman, his time on the wire, captured in richly evocative photographs, is an almost embarrassing example of the transcendent power of film. It is, in some respects, an ode to youth – to a prelapsarian age when things were simple, and the impossible was in reach. Up on that wire, in those photographs, Petit is frozen in time, immortal – a touchstone for our cultural memory.

But here Marsh expertly balances the majestic with the mundane. For all that he has a fine sense of the theatre of this quixotic dream, he understands the absurdity of these would-be master criminals fumbling with their plot. The film is often as hilarious as it is perennially inspiring, nowhere more so than in the contrast between [illegible] poets conquering the towers, and [illegible]erican author[illegible] psychiatrist [illegible] as he's down.

Maybe Marsh didn't set out to make a political statement. He is, after all, a storyteller. But in telling *this* story – in the filmmaker the heart and the humanity that he's invested in it – he's created something bigger. *Man on Wire* allows us to find joy in the story of the World Trade Center. And if that is a simple act of memory, it is one that offers profound and perhaps even cathartic consequences. ■

Anticipation. Marsh has an uneven track record, but the festival buzz for this one was big. Four

Enjoyment. Close to perfection. *Man on Wire* is a reminder of the inspirational power of cinema. Five

In Retrospect. Perhaps it won't change the world, but it's still a film to be cherished. Four

See page 36 for an interview with Philippe Petit.

THE INSIDE MAN



LWLIES SPEAKS TO THE MAN WHO PULLED THE STRINGS OF MAN ON WIRE – DIRECTOR JAMES MARSH.

LWLies: How did you find out about Philippe's story?
Marsh: There's this folk memory of the event in New York, and I was kind of dimly aware of someone doing this between the Twin Towers. Then Philippe published a memoir that lays out in a very subjective way how he got to do this – his first conception of it all the way through to the actual walk. Once you read the book you realise that there's a great film in the story. It's not just this one off 'stunt' – it's a criminal conspiracy that stretches back almost eight years.

LWLies: It's intriguing that your first thought was towards a documentary rather than a fiction film.
Marsh: Well, it has elements of a conventional Hollywood movie but because it really happened it's hard to improve on the cast of characters who really did this. They create this incredible human drama and they all had such strong and powerful memories of what they did. It felt to me like a very interesting challenge to tell what was an absolutely wonderful yarn in the most exciting way possible, and documentaries can indeed do that.

LWLies: When you describe Philippe's autobiography as 'subjective', do you mean 'not wholly truthful'?
Marsh: I think it's subjective in as much as he experiences and remembers things differently from other people who were involved. His view of what happened is very blinkered – he had this literally obsessive quest to do what he did, so 'subjective' means 'untroubled by other people's view of it'. Also, memory is an interesting thing. When you tell a story time and time again you embellish it in certain ways or you emphasise certain parts of it and let go of other parts. Where, to Philippe, it's a heroic narrative, to others it's a quixotic quest. One's a subjective point of view and the other's a more objective point of view, and who knows which is right? You try and make it so that both of those interpretations are available to the viewer.

LWLies: How did you find him as an interviewee? He looks difficult to control.
Marsh: You see from the film that it was virtually impossible. At some point you just have to liberate yourself and say, 'Okay, we're going to do this.' And it may be unconventional and it may not work at all, but if the protagonist of the story wants to tell the story this way, then who am I to tell him not to?

LWLies: Like the bit where he's hiding behind the curtain poking his head out...
Marsh: It's pure slapstick. But that's the way he remembers it – as this slapstick movie scene – so that's the way he portrays it to us. It works beautifully. That's one of the ways in which the film's reconstructions I think work best, they're clearly just evocations of the kind of energy that people are telling you about on screen.

LWLies: What about the way you deal with his confession of adultery? Do you think you let him off the hook?
Marsh: There was a kind of spectrum of response to the way the film ends. It is bittersweet in as much as if you achieve anything, if you score a hat-trick in the World Cup final, you know, what do you then do? His girlfriend, Annie, says, 'Well, our relationship was destined to end here, and it's beautiful that way.' And I kind of agree with that – it's a very romantic and a very forgiving way of looking at the fact that these relationships did in fact splinter after he did the walk. I think there's something quite adult and mature about that. The film is a kind of fairy tale with very joyous and beautiful elements in it, but it's also real and in real life this is what happens. What makes it a documentary after all is these real people and real, complex, messy relationships.

LWLies: The images of the World Trade Center are hugely evocative. Even though you don't mention 9/11, were you struck by the similarities?
Marsh: It was chilling. Really, when you first see that footage and you see the original Ground Zero and you see the excavations for the foundations, yes, of course, you're struck immediately. But I'm quite dogmatic about this, I didn't ever want to confuse 9/11 with Philippe's story, although of course I'm very aware that it's a perspective that everyone's going to bring to it. Also, who wants to see that fucking stuff again? I saw it with my own eyes, I don't want to see that stuff again in this film. If the film can make you believe in and enjoy those buildings in a different way for an hour and a half, then I think that's worth doing.

LWLies: How difficult is it move on from a documentary compared to a feature when you've met an extraordinary character like Philippe?
Marsh: You get entangled with people – you create quite intense relationships because you have to. There's


carhartt
www.carhartt-streetwear.com
Work In Progress Textilvertrieb GmbH - authorized distributor for europe © 2008 Carhartt Inc. U.S.A. ® carhartt and carhartt logo are registered trademarks of Carhartt Inc. Dearborn MI 48121 U.S.A.


"THIS SUMMER'S MUST-SEE HORROR FLICK"
i-D
"THE SEXIEST, MOST SHOCKING THRILLER OF THE YEAR"★★★★
EMPIRE
THIS PARTY IS GOING OVERBOARD
DONKEY
PUNCH
BRECK
ANGUS
MARK
FILM4
18
SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON WARP RECORDS FEATURING
THE KNIFE, PETER BJORN AND JOHN, JUSTICE/SIMIAN, BLOC PARTY AND MORE
WWW.DONKEYPUNCHMOVIE.CO.UK
IN CINEMAS NATIONWIDE JULY 18

His boy, young Icarus, that near him stood,
Unthinking of his fate, with smiles pursu'd
The floating feathers, which the moving air
Bore loosely from the ground, and wasted here and there.
Or with the wax importunately play'd,
And with his childish tricks the great design delay'd.
The final master-stroke at last impress'd,
And now, the neat machine completely clos'd;
Fitting his pinions on, a flight he tries,
And hung self-ballanc'd on the beaten skies.
Then thus instructs his child. "My boy, take care
To wing your course along the middle air,
If low, the surges wet your flagging plumes;
If high, the sun the melting wax consumes:
Steer between both: nor to the northern skies,
Nor south Orion turn your giddy eyes;
But follow me! let me before you lay
Rules for the flight, and mark the pathless way."

Ovid, *Metamorphoses* Book VIII: 305–325

CHAPTER TWO
INTRODUCE OURSELVES

LWLies:

What is it you love about movies?

James Marsh:

I have to say it's the power of the medium itself. It's what it can do to you. I still, when I go to see a film and it gets dark and your senses begin to kind of prick up a little bit, love that process of almost that dream-like state that a s great fi lm gets you into. So, for me, it's definitely the power of the medium. I think you experience it first when you're a kid and it kind of overwhelms you, but I've never lost that sense of wonder at it, So I'll go and see a film even now as the cynical old bastard that I am and want to feel that and often do feel that; that sense of wonder.

Philippe Petit:

Well, what I loved about the movies, what I have loved since I was a teenager, is the art - the art that is very different and yet very parallel to that of theatre - which I actually experimented in w hen I was a kid. It is the difficulty and the freedom of telling a story, and telling a story with moving images and music and a pair of scissors. To me it's e... I mean, I love all forms of art but I am completely in love w ith the art of filmmaking. I have actually written my own screen s tories, and all my life I saw myself as a frustrated director who has not yet done his first film.

Honest, passionate and unmerciful.



Publisher
Danny Miller
danny@littlewhitelies.co.uk



Editor
Matt Bochenski
matt@littlewhitelies.co.uk



Creative Directors
Rob Longworth & Paul Willoughby
www.thechurchoflondon.com



Associate Editor
Jonathan Crocker
jonathan@littlewhitelies.co.uk



Junior Designer
Victoria Talbot
victoria@littlewhitelies.co.uk



DVD Editor
Georgie Hobbs
georgie@littlewhitelies.co.uk



Incoming Editor
Neon Kelly
neon@littlewhitelies.co.uk



Website Editor
Jonathan Williams
jon@littlewhitelies.co.uk



Website Design
Alex Capes
alex@littlewhitelies.co.uk



Contributing Editors
Mike Brett
Andrea Kurland
Kevin Maher



Short Film Editor
James Bramble
james@littlewhitelies.co.uk



Sub-Editor
Sarah Riches
sarah@littlewhitelies.co.uk

Words, pictures, thanks...

King Adz, Graeme Allister, Jack Arnott, Danny Bangs, Henry Barnes, Anton Bitel, Ailsa Cairns, Jay Clifton, Lauren Cochrane, Adrian D'Enrico, Craig Driver, Paul Fairclough, Kat Halstead, Lorien Haynes, Sophie Henson, Sophie Ivan, Ellen E Jones, Adam LeeDavies, Kayt Manson, Jonas Mekk, Alexander Pashby, Andy Potts, Nicholas Queree, Lunara Salt, Adrian Sandsford, Anna Schorr, Sally Skinner, Dan Stewart, Ed Stocker, Mark Taplin, Emma Tiddsley, Penelope Valentine, Audrey Ward, Steve Watson, Jason Wood



Associate Publisher
Vince Medeiros
vince@thechurchoflondon.com



Advertising Director
Steph Pomphrey
steph@thechurchoflondon.com



Advertising Manager
Dean Faulkner
dean@thechurchoflondon.com



Distribution Manager
Ed Andrews
ed@thechurchoflondon.com

Made with the support of the UK Film Council through the Publications fund.

UK FILM COUNCIL
LOTTERY FUNDED

LWLies is published six times a year
Issue 18, The *Man On Wire* Issue
July/August 2008
ISSN 1745 9168

Made with paper from sustainable sources.

Published by
The Church of London Publishing
Studio 209, Curtain House
134-146 Curtain Road
London EC2A 3AR
+44 (0) 207 7293675

Distributed by
COMAG Specialist
Tavistock Works
Tavistock Road, West Drayton
Middlesex UB7 7QX
andy.hounslow@comag.co.uk

The articles appearing within this publication reflect the opinions and attitudes of their respective authors and not necessarily those of the publishers or editorial team.

© TCOLondon Publishing 2008


AS SEEN ON
TV
NEW ERA
NIYI
London
7 1/8
You're looking at the 59FIFTY,® one of many unique designs that is handcrafted to fit your life. Each cap has its own story and thanks to fans around the world, each story has a name.
Register online at neweracap.com and you could see your own face in a New Era ad.
NEW ERA
New Era Fits®

– PREMIUM BEER –
EXTRA SMOOTH
COBRA
कोबरा

LETTERS

This issue, we're still sheltering from the fallout of the *Persepolis* issue, while the blog goes from strength to strength. Keep posting on www.littlewhitelies.co.uk or e-mailing editorial@littlewhitelies.co.uk, and the best comment will win a bunch of beer courtesy of Cobra.

IRAN ROLLS ON

I found the combination of your articles on Iranian cinema, and Sohail's criticisms of those articles, very enlightening. It was fascinating to find out about this creative and vibrant film industry, and some of the restrictions filmmakers there face. I was intrigued to hear how government rules have helped shape Iranian cinema, rather than destroy it. After reading your articles and Sohail's letter, I found myself reflecting on the very different, but perhaps equally limiting restrictions faced by Western filmmakers. In regards to Sohail's criticism of the tone of your articles, I partly agree with him in one area. At least one of the articles does seem to overstate its case in praising Iranian cinema and denigrating Western cinema. I suspect, however, that your articles were aimed at readers like myself – reasonably educated, but having gaps in their knowledge of international filmmaking. It was, in fact, a revelation for me (and probably many readers) to learn about the richness of Iranian cinema. If we all knew everything about film, there would be little point in reading your magazine, I agree with Sohail that the Western media tends to portray Iran as a hostile enemy, however a proportion of us have the intelligence to view these reports critically. Articles like yours raise awareness of issues not always thought or known about; and whet the appetite to expand one's film horizons. Do you have anything other than beer as a prize?

Jason R

Thanks for the letter, Jason. It's been fascinating finding out how people have reacted to the Iranian issue, and seeing the discussion carry on for a second month. As for the prize, we admire your self-confidence. There's a crate of Babycham in the post.

FROM THE BLOG

Re. LWLies 17 is full of words and pictures

Ew. Ben Affleck. Ew.

Graimito

Graimito – I think it's perhaps a bit unfair to judge Ben Affleck the director based on his performance as Ben Affleck the unfortunate participant in *Gigli*... I haven't yet seen *Gone Baby Gone*, but from what I've heard it should be good. Plus, I think it's more Casey Affleck's film than it is Ben's. Casey has always been my favourite Affleck.

Graham

Ah yeah, fair enough. I didn't realise til I picked up the new issue yesterday that it's a Ben Affleck DIRECTED film. Intriguing. If anything, we should all breathe a collective sigh of relief should this signal a permanent move from in front of to behind the camera.

Graimito

Affleck is still hot

Emma

Re. Iron Man Review

"It's also wilfully naive, perhaps just plain offensive, in its presentation of a 'terrorist' threat stripped of any historical, religious or political context."

True, but you could also say that any effort to further identify the terrorist threat – location, cause, or other contextualising identifier – could be offensive as well. Intentional or not, unless kept at a ridiculously vague level it's possible to draw parallels with real life groups and/or incidents, which would (rightly) offend people involved in those issues. Give too much detail and people start seeing Al Qaeda, Hamas, IRA, Eta, etc., which would be inappropriate in this type of film. Bit of a no-win situation.

Bob

Yeah, but that bit where he blows up da tank is sweet. Lol.

Garbo

FROM THE ACCLAIMED DIRECTOR OF **THIS IS ENGLAND**

OFFICIAL SELECTION EDINBURGH FILM FESTIVAL

OFFICIAL SELECTION BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL

OFFICIAL SELECTION TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL

WINNER – BEST ACTOR TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL

"Hilarious, heartwarming British film-making... Superb"

★★★★

ROBBIE COLLIN, NEWS OF THE WORLD

"Charming, witty and surprisingly uplifting... Meadows delivers another winner"

★★★★

ANNA SMITH, NEW!

SOMERS TOWN

CERT TBC

A film by Shane Meadows

www.somers-town.com



IN CINEMAS AUGUST 22

film knight's

Hitting its stride and knocking screening events out of the park, *LWLies* and Suso are proud to announce the continuing world dominance of Film Knights! With a clear commitment to imagination, creativity and determination, Film Knights will celebrate the best in modern movie-making from big name directors to hungry young guns.

After a packed-out screening of Charles Burnett's legendary *Killer of Sheep* on June 3, we're proud to announce a very special event for Film Knights 04. On Tuesday July 1 at Curzon Soho we'll be welcoming tightrope maestro and *LWLies* cover star Philippe Petit, alongside documentary maker James Marsh, to introduce a screening of *Man on Wire*. It's going to be a great night, so get online and sort your tickets out, like, right now.

Join us at Curzon Soho for the next Film Knight on July 1, and the one after that, also at Curzon Soho (film TBC), on August 5. Check out www.littlewhitelies.co.uk/film-knights for info and to reserve your free tickets.

SUBSCRIBE AND WIN!

LWLies is published six times a year, and then distributed around the country by environmentally friendly carrier pigeons. Subscribe, and you'll get a year's worth of copies delivered to your door for only £15.

This issue, two new subscribers will each win a weekend camping ticket to Camp Bestival at Lulworth Castle, Dorset, from July 18-20, and a crate of Sweden's own Kopparberg cider. Camp Bestival is a monument to British summers past, with a top music line up curated by Rob da Bank, camp fires, circuses and other cool stuff (check it all out at www.campbestival.co.uk). Either fill in the form below or subscribe online between June 28 and July 11 and you'll be in the mix. Winners will be notified in time to get their arse to the south coast.

If you don't fancy slicing up your mag, just sling the info below onto a piece of paper and pop it in the post with a cheque to 'LWLies Subscriptions, Studio 209, Curtain House, 134-146 Curtain Road, London, EC2A 3AR'.





NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

EMAIL

TYPE OF SUBSCRIPTION

☐ **UK** – £15 (6 issues)

☐ **Europe (air mail)** – £22.50 (6 issues)

☐ **Rest of world (air mail)** – £30.00 (6 issues)

Please enclose a cheque for the relevant amount made payable to The Church Of London Publishing Ltd.

You can also subscribe by Paypal from anywhere in the world by visiting www.littlewhitelies.co.uk

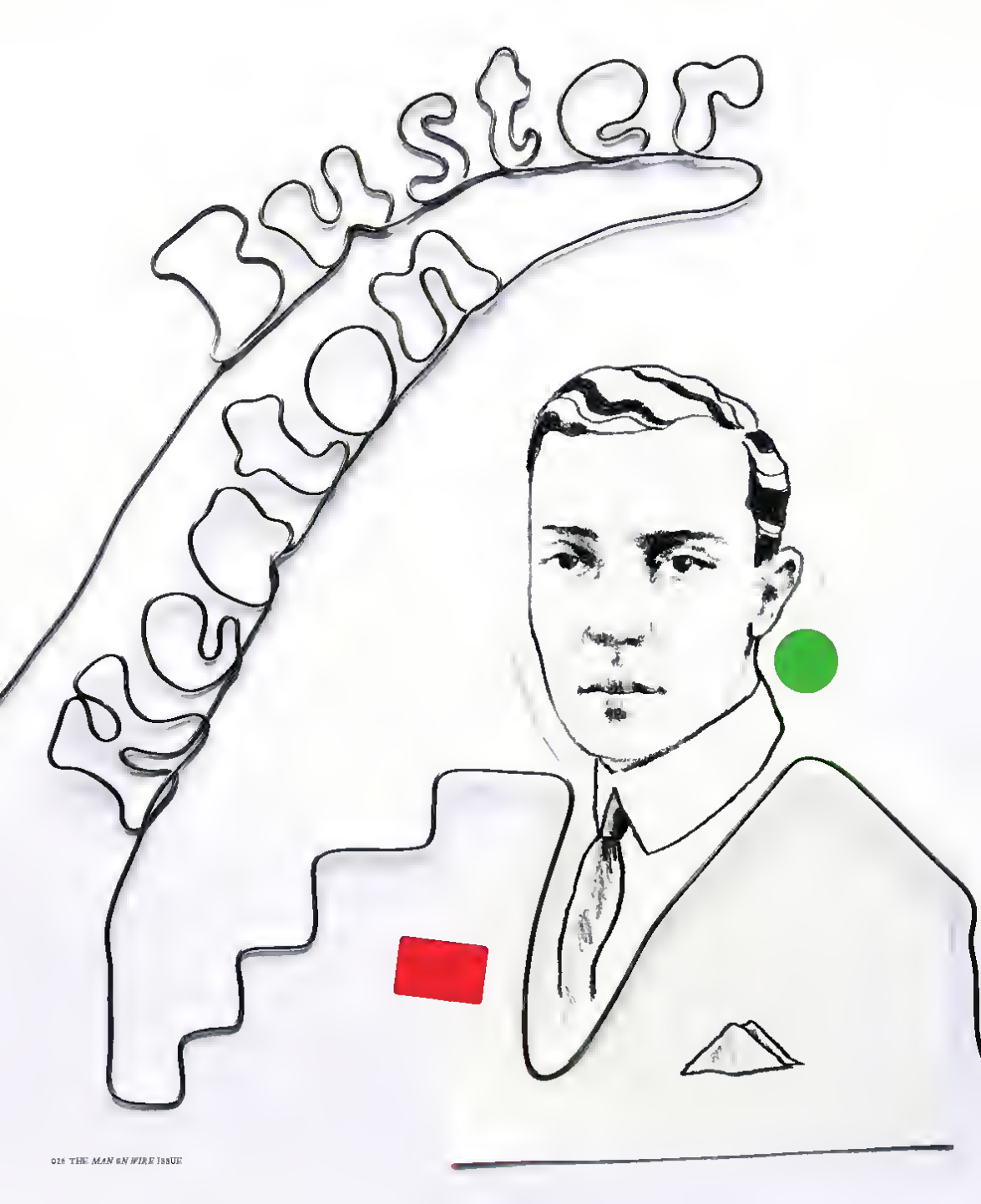

grand theft auto IV
Out Now
www.rockstargames.com/iv
18
XBOX 360. LIVE
PLAYSTATION 3


CHAPTER THREE
IN WHICH WE DISCUSS
THE
OF UNCOMMON
INTEREST
INSPIRED BY OUR
FEATURE
FILM

BUSTER KEATON'S DREAMS

ENTER THE MAVERICKS, THE DAREDEVILS, THE RISK-TAKERS PREPARED TO PUT BODY AND SOUL ON THE LINE FOR CINEMA. THIS IS BOTH OUR HERITAGE AND OUR FUTURE. THESE ARE OUR HEROES.

Buster Keaton



HE WAS THE MAN WHO AMAZED HOUDINI, THE DIRECTOR WHO CHEATED DEATH. BUSTER KEATON WAS CINEMA'S FIRST AND GREATEST DAREDEVIL.

Forget Spielberg. Forget Hitchcock. Forget Bresson. Did they ever battle hurricanes or play billiards with a hand grenade? As a baby Joseph Francis Keaton was hurled – literally – into his parents' violent slapstick vaudeville show. None other than Harry Houdini gave him the name 'Buster' after seeing him tumble down a flight of stairs unhurt. He was six months old at the time, already en route to becoming cinema's greatest daredevil.

And make no mistake. Keaton is more than just an acrobatic clown – he's a true maestro of the medium. During his 1920s purple patch, he made a string of back-to-back masterpieces where Chaplin managed just two. But for all the technical dazzle of his films, Keaton never believed in special effects. Creator, director and star, he had vision, invention, cinematic awareness, technical skill and balls the size of watermelons. Seemingly made of rubber, he makes Tony Jaa look geriatric – no wire, no CGI, no limits.

Take the climax of his first full length classic, *Our Hospitality* (1923). A girl is about to be swept over a giant waterfall until, at the moment of doom, Keaton swings in on a rope, plucks her out of mid-air and lands them both on a rocky ledge. "A couple of times I swung out and dropped upside down when I caught her," he later recalled. "I had to go to the doctor right then and there because when a full volume of water comes down and hits you like that and you're upside down, then you really get it."

Famously unsmiling, 'The Great Stone Face' took everything on the chin. The world had always been a chaotic and dangerous place – he just made sure it was possible to laugh. *Sherlock Jr.* (1924) sees Keaton riding solo on the handlebars of a motorbike – the driver having fallen off – before flying feet-first through a window. "That was a hell of a job," he remembered. "Number one, I've got no brakes. Well, I got beautiful spills. Some real beauties! I parked right on top of an automobile once. I hit it head on. Ended up with my fanny against the windshield and feet in the air!" The film ends with another extraordinary stunt – captured in a single 40 second take. Climbing on to the roof of a speeding train, Keaton jumps along the top of the carriages, before leaping off and grabbing the chain of an overhead water pipe. His weight brings it down and he swings there as a torrent of water washes him onto the track. Years later, Keaton would discover he'd fractured his neck performing the stunt.

At the time, he was too busy figuring out ways to – well, top himself. More train trauma followed in *The General* (1927). Here, Keaton sends a locomotive crashing down a ravine into a river, fires cannonballs and sits on the tip of a moving engine, dislodging obstacles on the track in front of him. In *Seven Chances* (1925) he runs full pelt down a steep valley – having triggered a landslide that sends some 1,500 giant boulders crashing down the hill after him as he ducks and dodges a crushing demise.

But catastrophe comedy *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* (1928), his last independently produced film, would be his most dazzlingly spectacular, featuring the most elaborate and dangerous set pieces in cinema history. An apocalyptic cyclone hits the town where Keaton has been imprisoned. People, cars and houses are blown away until only he is left clinging on. The building he's sleeping in is lifted clean into the air, his bed is dragged through the streets and Keaton is promptly whirled away like a rag doll. "We had six wind machines that could lift a truck right off the road," recalled the filmmaker. In his most perfect stunt, the side of a building crashes down on top of him as he's saved by an open window that fits neatly around him. "We built the window so I had a clearance of two inches on each shoulder," he said. "The top missed my head by two inches. It's a one take scene and we got it. You don't do these things twice."

By 33, his career was practically over. He'd lost his creative freedom and spent the rest of his life struggling with drink, sickness and failure. But as cinema moves further and further away from the thrill of the real, his movies – only around 24 hours of silent film – look ever more breathtaking. No wonder Philippe Petit has a picture of Buster stuck to his mirror. **Jonathan Crocker**

Over the following pages, we speak exclusively to a number of filmmakers who still carry the spark of Keaton's propulsive risk-taking in their films, perhaps in their genes. They are the ones keeping it real in a world dominated by CGI. Keeping Buster Keaton's dreams alive.

FROM BURNING DESERTS TO FROZEN WILDERNESS, ASIF KAPADIA HAS TESTED HIMSELF IN THE WORLD'S MOST EXTREME CLIMATES.

Most directors play it safe on their first film. Even Orson Welles, whose debut *Citizen Kane*, blew the bloody doors off Old Hollywood, didn't venture too far beyond the LA city limits.

But Asif Kapadia didn't get the memo. Not for him some Pinewood back lot. Not for him some measured minimalism on a London street. His first film, *The Warrior* (2001), took him from the white hot deserts of Rajasthan to the snow covered peaks of the Himalayas. And as if that experience wasn't gruelling enough, his latest, *Far North*, was filmed on the frozen Arctic island of Svalbard.

Asif Kapadia may just be among the last of cinema's true adventurers. For *The Warrior*, the story of a feudal enforcer hunted across the vast plains of India, "I tried to look like I knew what I was up to, but I was just living off my instincts," he recalls. "I went into the film knowing that we were doing everything you are not supposed to do, working with children, animals, working in my second language, with non professional actors. We had large crowd scenes, action sequences – we had to build and burn down a village. We started the shoot in 45 degree heat in the desert, and ended in freezing conditions in the Himalayas."

The desert presented a unique set of challenges – sand is the natural enemy of filmmaking equipment – but far more pressing were the physical demands made on cast and crew who shot six days a week for over two months. "I had no idea what we would be putting our bodies and minds through," says Kapadia, who succumbed to sunstroke himself. "I climbed a mountain one morning to see if it would give us a nice, high angle. Foolishly I set off without my hat and as the sun came up I got caught. I suffered terribly with migraines for days afterwards. I lost my sense of balance and kept falling over."

Add to that the threat of razor sharp cacti cutting through the sole of your boots, as well as snakes, scorpions and the ever present threat of dehydration, and Kapadia must have been praying for a change of scenery. Never one to do things by half, he got that and more on the set of *Far North*, his latest adventure in which two indigenous women fall for the same man against the backdrop of the Arctic wilderness.

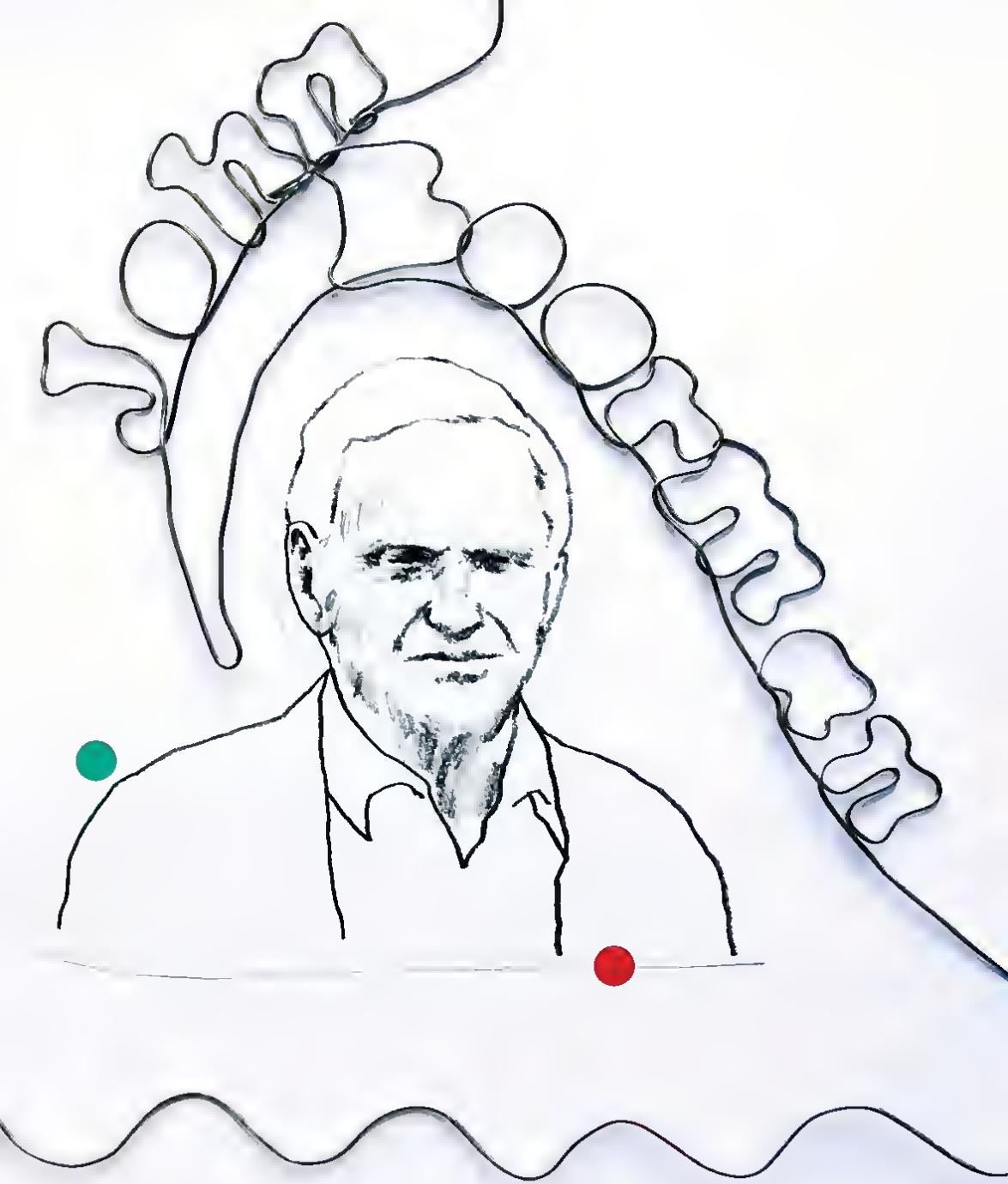
"The cold is so much more dangerous than heat," he says. "Your body starts to shut down. You cannot think straight..." Shooting in temperatures of minus 40 degrees, surrounded by glaciers and icebergs, and constantly on the lookout for polar bears, conditions took their toll. A member of the crew fainted, as did actress Michelle Yeoh, on camera. She was taken away to base camp – an old Soviet icebreaker. "The cast and crew were exhausted," remembers Kapadia. "We had been shooting on Svalbard for a month, living on the icebreaker. It was the coldest location of all. We were on our feet all day on a live glacier, you could feel the freezing cold seeping into your body through the soles of your shoes."

These weren't the only dangerous moments. They travelled everywhere with armed guards packing .44 Magnums to scare away any curious wildlife. On one scouting trip, however, Kapadia got separated from his guard cum guide. "I was alone in the middle of the frozen Arctic Ocean, in one of the darkest, most unpopulated places in the world, in the middle of a dark, freezing night. If a hungry polar bear came along I would never see it, and no one would ever see me again. Who knows if they would ever find my remains? All these thoughts went through my head as I waited for what felt like hours to see the lone headlight of a snowmobile on the horizon coming back for me. I've never been so terrified before in my life."

What drives Kapadia is a hunger for the unpredictable, an old fashioned sense of romance. After all, he's tasted the alternative and found it bitter. In the wake of *The Warrior* offers flooded in from Hollywood. He caved, made *The Return* with Sarah Michelle Gellar in the bosom of the studio system. "It wasn't quite what it said on the wrapper," is all he'll say of the experience today.

And now? He won't go back. "I don't want total freedom to do everything," he explains. "I like the restrictions a real location brings. It just comes down to taste. I'm a simple man. I want to find somewhere real and go shoot there." **Matt Bochenski**


Asif
Kapadia



SOME OF CINEMA'S TOUGHEST ACTORS HAVE LEARNED ONE IMPORTANT LESSON: YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE BOORMAN.

John Boorman doesn't believe in doing things easily. He has shot films in almost every environment you can imagine – in the depths of the Amazon for *The Emerald Forest* on the rivers and rice fields of Malaysia for *Beyond Rangoon*, in Panama, South Africa, and in the Polynesian islands. Then there's his friendship with Lee Marvin, who persuaded him to use real guns on *Point Blank* ("He said that fiction overtakes reality") and who inspired his most difficult shoot, 1962 war thriller *Hell in the Pacific*.

For a claustrophobic hour and a half it's American GI Marvin versus Japanese solder Toshiro Mifune, marooned on a desert island and desperate to kill each other. Filming this was, well, hell, according to the director. "We filmed on an island in Palau, absolutely miles away from the mainland. We should have filmed it in Hawaii, but I was young and foolish," he recalls. "I wanted it to be on a South Sea island but with no palm trees. People see palm trees and think 'Oh, this is paradise.' But I didn't want it to be paradise. I wanted it to be hell."

And hell it was. Although the film only has two actors in it, the logistics of shooting on a desert island were intense. "We lived on a ship – me, Marvin, Mifune and this Japanese crew. We had to go out onto the island every day in a rubber raft. Then we were marooned until we got the shots we wanted." This may have suited Boorman and Marvin, but things were quite different with Japanese actor Mifune. "We had problems," admits Boorman. "I had to get him in the right place, and culturally it wasn't easy. For me to correct him in front of this Japanese crew was extremely difficult. We never physically came to blows, but it was quite a fight nonetheless."

Boorman says he isn't a hard taskmaster but admits, "I do think you should push actors. When an actor is working to extremes, good things happen. They should test how far they can go." By far the greatest test was during the shooting of *Deliverance*, probably Boorman's best known film. The 1972 thriller, a tense masculine drama about man against nature, was filmed in the wilds of Georgia. It was seat of the pants filming at its very finest. "All the filming on the river, we did that with just a cameraman, myself and one grip. There was no support. All we had was a plastic bag full of sandwiches." Day after day Boorman and his skeleton crew pushed the quartet of actors – Jon Voight, Burt Reynolds, Ned Beatty and Ronny Cox – to their limits and beyond. "It was gruelling, absolutely exhausting," he says. "You watch that film again, you can see the strain in their faces. It was beyond acting. Those guys were all there for real, in that valley, on that river. Each one would push the others further."

It wasn't just actors that Boorman pushed to the limits. In *The Emerald Forest* (re release on DVD in July) Boorman cast his son Charley as the film's lead, a Western boy who is kidnapped by Amazonian Indians and brought up in the wild. A latter day Mowgli, the boy becomes fully immersed in the world of the tribe until his father (played by Powers Boothe) ventures into the jungle to find him. If *Deliverance* was done on a shoestring with a handful of crew, *The Emerald Forest* was the opposite: a studio picture with a full crew and legions of extras. Filming, says Boorman, was a nightmare.

"We had sickness and diseases, huge electrical storms which washed our equipment away – the physical toll was enormous." Everyone was affected. Boothe almost drowned filming in a waterfall. Charley was severely bitten on the feet by red ants. Did Boorman ever come close to a nervous breakdown, Coppola style? "No, it was never as bad as that. But I was exhausted afterwards. We were all being stung by these tropical mosquitoes. You don't feel anything, not at first, you just see a trickle of blood. But then you break out in welts. The body can't handle the poison." He chuckles. "It was pretty nasty."

In spite of working with some of the industry's biggest hell-raisers, Boorman says he's never had problems with big name actors. "All these guys – Connery, Burton, all that lot – I never had any problems with. They were professionals. The only problems you have are with second rate people, the people who think they're stars." Such as Mifune? "No, no, that was just a misunderstanding. I get on very well with actors. I'm still friends with all the people I have ever worked with." He laughs again. "Well, most of them." **Dan Stewart**

NEVER A DIRECTOR TO HIDE BEHIND THE CAMERA, HARMONY KORINE RETELLS HOW HIS *FIGHT HARM* PROJECT SAW HIM GET HIS KICKS BY TAKING A SHOEING.

In 1999, after his directorial debut *Gummo* and before *Julien Donkey Boy* Harmony Korine gathered together a crew of "bums schlums and tramps" (his words) to begin work on *Fight Harm*, a project that would never be completed and has never been publicly shown. The idea was to film Korine getting into brawls and the rules were simple:

1) He would not throw the first punch.

2) He would only provoke fights with people bigger than himself.

3) No matter how gruesome things got, the crew would not intervene unless someone's life was in danger.

And things got gruesome. "The worst one was the bouncer at Stringfellows," says Korine cheerfully, recalling the shoot from his home in Nashville, nearly nine years later. "He stamped on both my ankles and broke them, then strangled me with the string of a balloon. That one was pretty funny, actually."

There was also the huge lesbian from Harlem, the Arab guy with the mandolin ("My intention was to fight every demographic," Korine explains), the woman who punctured his stomach with her umbrella, and several other unsuspecting members of the public, all of whom, oddly, agreed to sign a release form once the fight was over. Six fights in total, three arrests and several stints in hospitals – wasn't he scared of having his head kicked in? "Not so much. It just seemed like something that the kids back home would love."

If you're looking for the short answer as to why Korine decided to risk life and limb for a few minutes of footage that would never see the inside of a cinema, that's it: right there, it was a prank. It was a skate video meets *Jackass* style stunt, something they'd show on *You've Been Framed: The Late Night Edition*, something to impress the kids back home.

Fight Harm preceded *Jackass* by at least 18 months, and like Knoxville and company, Korine emerged from the '90s skate scene (he met Larry Clark, with whom he collaborated on *Kids*, while skating in New York's Washington Square Park), and shared both an appreciation of slapstick, honed on skate videos, and the high pain threshold you develop after the fourth or fifth time you collide face-first with the kerb while practising a kickflip.

Or, if you're after the long answer, *Fight Harm* was motivated by something much darker and more complex, by the self-destructive impulse that no great artist is without. That seems to have been the opinion of Korine's friends and family, anyway. Under pressure from them, he eventually, reluctantly, abandoned the project with only 15 minutes of usable footage.

"Everyone was concerned about my sanity," he grumbles. "In truth, I was never for a moment insane. I knew exactly what I was doing and I just thought it was noble. It was like pure comedy, like the Three Stooges or WC Fields – a kind of physical slapstick humour."

Not only was *Fight Harm* intended as entertainment, it was, says Korine, intended as mainstream entertainment. He had even hoped the completed project would play on large screens in shopping malls across America – "Y'know, like the kind of thing that Harrison Ford would come out and endorse, or Tom Hanks would maybe narrate it, as if he were God."

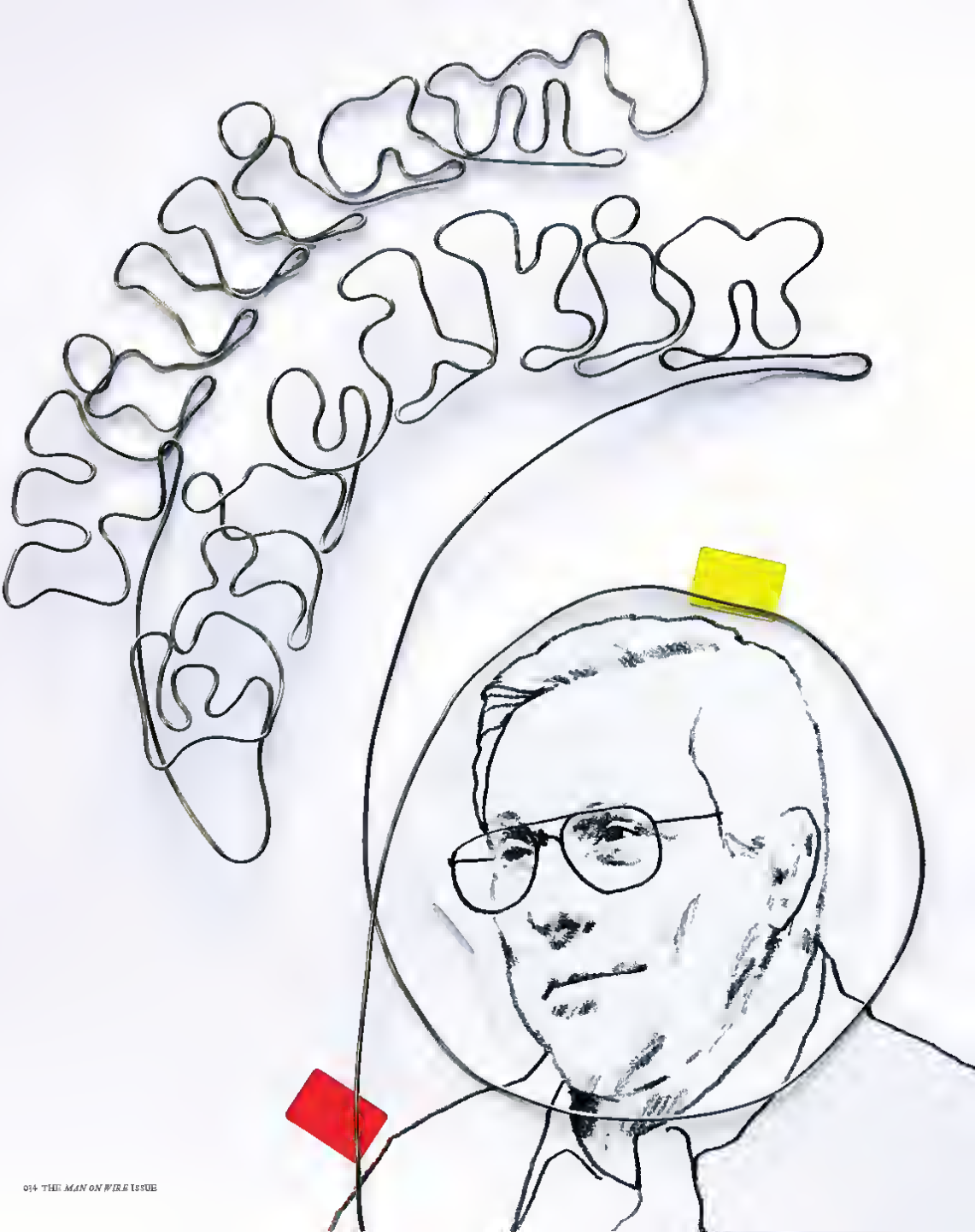
He's joking about the Tom Hanks bit. Probably. Harmony Korine is, after all, a pretty funny man. In conversation, his tone drifts disconcertingly from teasing irony to utter earnestness, so that when he comes out with a statement like "We wanted to make the 'Great American Comedy'" the thrill is in deciding which one it is this time.

Most of the filmmakers we call 'eccentric' suffer from a divaish regard for their own talent. With Korine, it's something different. Like his mentor and some time collaborator Werner Herzog, he simply has the kind of well developed sense of humour that often casts him as the butt of his own jokes. Just watch his artfully goofy appearances on *Letterman*, or his latest feature, *Mister Lonely*, which, in spite of – and often because of – its wilfully nonsensical mood, has several laugh-out-loud moments.

Korine is a stand-up trapped in the body of an arthouse film director and he's deadly serious about making you laugh. "I'd much rather watch someone push themselves to some sort of an extreme than a dilettante behind the camera," he says. *Fight Harm* may be the ultimate expression of that dedication to extremes, but it's not the risks he takes that define Korine as a filmmaker – it's the reasons he takes them.

At final curtain-call, Korine is an old fashioned entertainer with a show must go-on mentality. He's Ethel Merman belting out 'There's No Business Like Show Business' with a tired grimace on her face. "It's not like I'm a daredevil or anything," he shrugs. "Really, I just want to make people laugh." **Ellen E Jones**





THIS MOVIE BRAT'S MACHO SWAGGER SYMBOLISED A NEW WAVE OF GRITTILY AUTHENTIC CINEMA. SO WHY IS HE EXTOLLING THE VIRTUES OF CGI?

"Get the shot," says William Friedkin. "That was our mindset at the time: nothing matters but the shot." For a rag tag band of filmmakers in the 1970s that quixotic search for the shot would test their courage their endurance, even their sanity. This was New Hollywood and it it was inspired more by the European New Wave than the comic extremes of Buster Keaton; it shared his total physical commitment to cinema.

No risk was too reckless. For Friedkin, who would go on to make *The Exorcist* on a shoot that has passed into legend (deaths, curses, evil in the film reel...) the moment of truth came in 1971 in the back of a Pontiac LeMans. Filming a pivotal chase scene in Brooklyn for *The French Connection*, he knew that there was no way to fake it. "Everything that we did back then had to be done mechanically: you had to get out there and do it," he explains. "You want a car chase at 90mph? You had to shoot it at 90mph."

Wrapped in an old mattress for protection, Friedkin operated the camera as a stunt driver took the car through uncontrolled traffic. Other stunt drivers were supposed to create realistic looking near misses, but with only one take, errors in timing – and the resulting smashes – were all left in the film. Friedkin chose to operate the camera because he was the only one without a wife and kids. "I was very young. I had no concept of death or injury, I just wanted to get on film what I wanted to get on film."

In 1977, two years before Francis Ford Coppola discovered his own heart of darkness, Friedkin ventured into the jungles of Mexico for the film that turned out to be his greatest folly, *Sorcerer*. Based on the French classic, *The Wages of Fear*, it sees Roy Scheider as a remote oil platform operator driving a truckload of volatile chemicals through the jungle. The shoot took Friedkin to Mexico's parched Oaxaca province, where everything went very, very wrong. Besides delays forced on them when the rivers began to dry up in the heat, leading to crippling budget overruns, 50 people on the crew succumbed to gangrene and had to be medevac'd out. "I feel very lucky that things weren't worse," is how Friedkin remembers it today. "Thank God nobody died. A lot of the stuff that I had done could have injured people badly."

And yes, there's regret in this admission. Friedkin might be the macho muse of the '70s, but ask him if he'd do it all again and the answer is a resounding 'no'. "The guys like Werner Herzog and myself and Coppola who went out and had to do it all, we only did that because CGI wasn't available – it wasn't even a gleam in someone's eye," he says. "If I was doing the same pictures again – and I'm sure this is true of Coppola – we would do it the modern way."

That's a major bombshell from somebody whose work is the antithesis of the visual anaemia of computer effects. But Friedkin is unapologetic. The effects are good, he says, and moreover the audience simply doesn't care. "It's like magic: everybody knows that the magician producing the elephant is a trick but when they see it they think it's great."

While that may be true in the short term, surely part of the reason that films like *The French Connection* and *Apocalypse Now* have remained so popular is because of the mythology that attaches to them. The simple act of 'being there' invested these films with a sense of reality, an air of danger that audiences react to on an almost subconscious level. If we knew, in the back of our minds, that Coppola and Friedkin hadn't suffered for their films, would we care about them in the same way?

While Friedkin insists that the results would have been just as powerful ("It would have been the same if the story had been the same because I think we would have used these graphics with some restraint"), it's more a question of evolution. For Friedkin, the age of practical effects is coming to an end. "Nobody's going to go out and try to do the things that we did," he says. "Now that you have the technology, why not use it?"

If the old-fashioned approach to filmmaking is to survive, it's up to a new generation to save it. After all, at 72, Friedkin isn't going to be climbing into the back of a Pontiac any time soon. "I have since that period contemplated death, and so I appreciate life even more," he says. "I won't be running around with cameras at 90mph, I just wouldn't do it now to get the shot. Yes, all of that stuff was our mindset at the time, but I don't think that that's a healthy attitude to life." **Matt Bochenski**



NO LITTLE LIFE

PERFORMANCE ARTIST, CREATIVE VISIONARY AND MAD GENIUS OF THE SKY – PHILIPPE PETIT TALKS EXCLUSIVELY TO *LWLIES*.

WORDS BY MATT BOCHENSKI

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANNA SCHORI



It's been 53 years since Philippe Petit was called by the air. As a four year old his feet scarcely touched the ground, by six he had become "half man, half bird", climbing everything from rock faces to trees, undaunted by "little steps from reality."

"I climbed to escape," he remembers. "In my early childhood I saw that the whole of society – my school, my parents, my surroundings – were the forbidding force. I became a rebel, I fought that force so I could build my destiny."

Now pushing 60, Petit speaks from the exalted position of a man who achieved his destiny and more besides. It took him on a wire across the spires of Notre Dame, along the apex of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and, in 1974, to New York, where he walked between the 110 storey towers of the World Trade Center complex, standing 1,362 feet above the city.

And yet for all that Philippe spent his childhood taking regular "flights" he came late to the wire. Magic was his first discovery. He would practice for hours on his own, honing his skills. It was through magic that he learned of wire walking and resolved to teach himself this esoteric discipline. At 16 he took his first steps; missteps, more often than not. "I didn't know the kind of rope ▼



"I DIDN'T KNOW THE KIND OF ROPE TO HAVE, I DIDN'T KNOW THE KIND OF KNOT, I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO TENSION IT. WHEN I LOOK AT IT NOW IT'S LAUGHABLE."

to have. I didn't know the kind of knot. I didn't know how to tension it," he says. "When I look at it now it's laughable."

The memories are still vivid. They come spilling out in theatrical flourishes of accented English as Petit, ever the performer, has perfected his role as the philosopher poet meets holy fool. For 12 months he lived on the wire, sneaking out of school and spending five, six, even seven hours a day on the tightrope. When he speaks about it, he could be describing his first love. And then you realise, he is. The wire has been the most important and the most enduring romance of his life. "It was an exploration and a conquest," he purrs, "a mix of joy and frustration, impatience, despair, the elation of making progress and discovering that perfection cannot be attained. I remember what I loved – the solitary discourse, the solitary communion between me and my cable."

Within a year, Petit was giving his first public performance. In 1968, at the age of 19, he was sitting in a dentist's office reading a magazine when he saw an article about two buildings which were set to begin construction in New York. On their completion in 1973 they would be the tallest towers in the world. Struck by something like a prophetic vision, Petit took a pen and drew a single line from one illustrated tower to the next, a simple foundation for an audacious scheme that would be almost eight years in the making and culminate in what one observer would call 'the greatest performance art crime of the century'.

That sense of artistry is the key to Petit's image of himself – call him a 'stuntman' at your own risk. He's no thrill seeker, no adrenalin junkie on the lookout for a quick fix. "The world of the high wire is a world of peace and calm and profundity," he explains. "It is not a world of danger and treacherousness. I have a life wish, not a death wish."

And it's not that Petit lives without fear. But the nature of his fears allows him to stand up and walk in places where the rest of us would turn to jelly. "I am like anybody else. I have a lot of fears," he says. "But when it comes to my domain – the altitude, the treetops, the clouds, moving around the birds – I do not have any fear. I have the opposite of fear. I have an impatience to be there." He has an almost pathological relationship with the concept of falling – you sense that a psychologist could spend many happy hours in his company – but however he does it, this mastery over the mind as well as his body simply adds to the mystique, to the mysticism even, that so moves the people who witness his walks.

To Petit, the reaction he solicits from onlookers is further proof that he is an artist. Where the stuntman calculates some physical action, the artist, he says, "is called to do something beautiful." And when people see him perform, "They do not talk to me about 'stunts'; they talk about poetry and theatre and how they are behind me on that wire, and how it uplifts the heart and how they feel that everything is possible." ▼

Everything is possible. The right to believe that cliché has been hard won. There have been many obstacles in his way, not least because Petit's greatest performances have involved breaking and entering into highly sensitive landmarks. But it isn't security guards he recalls when judging the barriers he has faced. "Throughout my life of creating I meet so many people that I have to fight and spend such an enormous amount of my time and energy to convince them that they should let me do what I do," he sighs. These, he says, are the "narrow minded people who close doors and throw away the key instead of leaving the door ajar and allowing artists to reach their fellow man."

But that in itself begs a question. If there are so many of these people around, what place is there in the world for artists like Petit? In 1974 he became a global sensation; if he tried a similar trick today, he'd most likely get himself renditioned to Guantanamo, or just shot on sight. Has the age of the artist passed into something altogether more earthbound and mundane? "This is the kind of negative human nature that I resent," he says. "Nowadays we live in a world that is more and more sheltered, where the word 'security' is tagged on every door. Where is life? Where is humanity? Where is poetry? Where is theatre? That's what I am fighting against."

If 9/11 changed the rules for Philippe professionally, it also affected him on a far more personal level. Few people's life stories are as intimately connected to a single place as his own. To wake up one morning and find the physical record of his dream erased must have been something of a psychic shock. "I carried those towers so alive in my heart for so long that the day they died, I felt something pulled out of me," he admits. "But I think I have no right to talk like that when we know that in their collapse they took thousands of human lives."

Though *Man on Wire* steers clear of the subject, the destruction of the World Trade Center is there, unspoken, in every frame. While Petit is unequivocal that this was the right approach ("I am glad the film doesn't ask me about it because I would have refused to answer") he also recognises that for American audiences particularly at Tribeca – Robert De Niro's New York film festival established in the wake of the tragedy – the film has had an almost cathartic effect. "People were apprehensive," he explains, "but what I heard them say is that this film actually helps them find their way between the remembrance of that horrifying event, and the remembrance of something glorious and beautiful."

After 9/11, his experience at the summit of the World Trade Center towers could easily have become a weight around his neck – a constant reminder that the scene of his greatest triumph has become a monument to a kind of global disintegration. But for now he is happy to relive those memories, or most of them, at least.

Man on Wire ends with an extraordinary coda in which Petit, having returned to earth, finds himself a celebrity at the centre of a media firestorm. After working for years with friends who sacrificed everything for him – particularly his girlfriend, Annie – within 24 ▼

"NOWADAYS WE LIVE IN A WORLD THAT IS MORE AND MORE SHELTERED. WHERE IS LIFE? WHERE IS HUMANITY? WHERE IS POETRY?"



hours he was in bed with a stranger. The aftermath of the walk marked the end of the group that had planned it.

Director James Marsh never really calls Petit to account over his behaviour that day, although that doesn't stop Petit voicing his discontent about this part of the film. "I actually do not agree with the fact that this scene is in the film," he says. "But the director wanted it. It is in my book, but it is half a page of poetic evocation of this pleasure moment. I wanted to let the reader understand that I surrendered to some kind of joyful dance, but it was not a consequential act at all." Only there were consequences: the end of some of the most significant relationships in his life. Of all the people to have his head turned by celebrity, Petit seems the least likely – he turned down millions in endorsement offers in the weeks following the walk, and returned to Paris a struggling street artist – and yet he failed his moment of temptation, betraying the people closest to him. Unsurprisingly, he doesn't see it that way. "There was a moment where I was lost and I jumped onto a chance encounter, a little moment of pleasure. But I would not feel that it was betraying anybody."

Instead, he says, he acted in the moment of vulnerability that follows every successful wire walk. "There is this return to earth that is always a little painful, and then there is the immense, intense exhaustion that comes from having done the walk," he explains. In New York, the sheer scale of the achievement magnified that feeling. "The downfall, the emptiness that I feel after having achieved one of those dreams: this was quite big after the World Trade Center walk. All that gave me the feeling that I was dead, that I was empty, that I was lost."

James Marsh describes Petit as a 'quixotic' character, but the thing about Quixote is that his dreams were impossible. What, exactly, are you left with once you've achieved them? "I would not talk about the World Trade Center as the dream of my life – there have been many before, during and after," insists Petit. For now, he is content to spend a little while looking back, but it won't be long, you feel, before the next challenge comes along, before he's back in the barn he built with his own hands where his wire hangs, sheltered from the elements, surrounded by images of the people who inspire him – Francis Brunn, Werner Herzog, Señor Wences, Buster Keaton. This is a life lived singularly undimmed by past achievements. "I love my life the way it unfolded and I would not change anything. There was a lot of naivety, a lot of childlike feelings and a lot of camaraderie. It was an adventure," says Petit, "and I continue to be like this." ■



Philippe on his tattoos: "The one under the sole is a little planet holding a tightrope to infinity. On my ankle is a view of the Grand Canyon with a solitary mezzanine holding a high wire crossing."

BEN KINGSLEY JOSH PECK FAMKE JANSSEN OLIVIA THIRLBY MARY-KATE OLSEN METHOD MAN

NYC. SUMMER 1994.
THE GIRLS WERE FLY. THE MUSIC WAS DOPE.
AND LUKE WAS JUST TRYING TO DEAL.



"ONE OF THE COOLEST FILMS OF THE SUMMER"
DAVID EDWARDS, DAILY MIRROR

WINNER
AUDIENCE AWARD
SUNDANCE
FILM FESTIVAL

THE WACKNESS

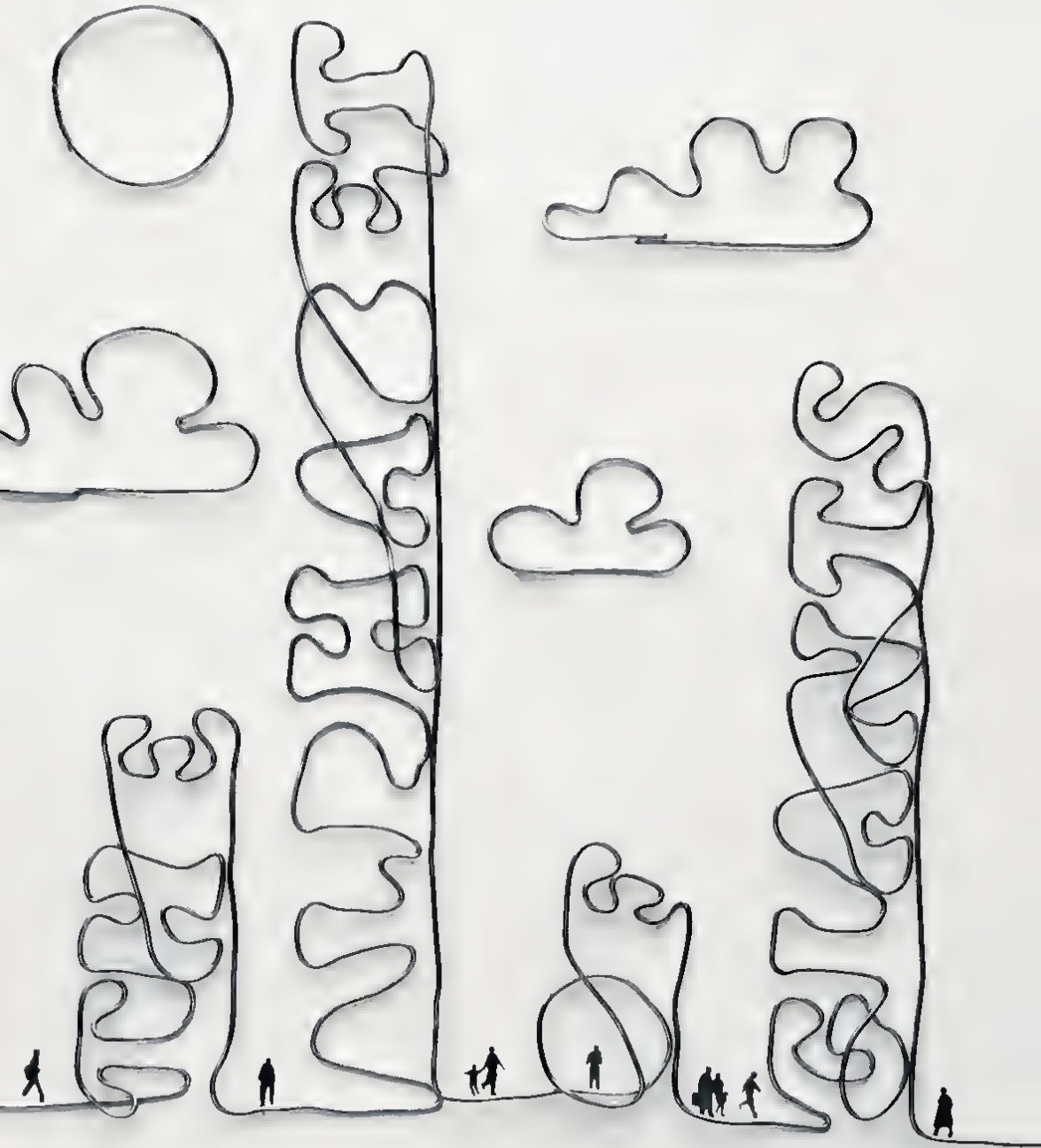
CERT TBC

IN CINEMAS AUGUST 29

A REVOLVER ENTERTAINMENT RELEASE OCCUPANT FILMS AND SBK PICTURES PRESENT BEN KINGSLEY JOSH PECK FAMKE JANSSEN OLIVIA THIRLBY MARY-KATE OLSEN AND METHOD MAN "THE WACKNESS"
CO-PRODUCER BRIAN BOOVICH DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY PETRA KORNER PRODUCTION DESIGNER ANNIE SPITZ COSTUME DESIGNER MICHAEL CLARCY EDITOR JOSH NOYES MUSIC SUPERVISOR JIM BLACK MUSIC PRODUCER BRYAN LAWSON MUSIC BY DAVID TORN
CASTING BY JOANNA COLBERT RICHARD MENTO PRODUCED BY KEITH CALDER FELIPE MARINO JOE NEURAUTER WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JONATHAN LEVINE

OCCUPANT revolver ENTERTAINMENT

WWW.THEWACKNESS.CO.UK



LWLIES INVESTIGATES WHY THE WORLD'S TALLEST BUILDINGS CONTINUE TO EXERT A GRIP ON OUR COLLECTIVE CULTURAL PSYCHE.

WORDS BY STEVE WATSON

Big buildings have never been so big. According to commercial real estate and construction website Emporis, 40 per cent of the high rise buildings on earth have been built since 2000, and around eight per cent of the world's stock of tall buildings is currently under construction. In his recent *Harvard Design Magazine* article 'A Taxonomy of Towers', architect Alejandro Zaera Polo quotes these figures as proof of what he sees as a new epoch in human habitation of the world.

"We live in a culture that is primarily urban," he writes. "More than 50 per cent of the world's population now lives in cities and that pressure is going to keep growing. There is a lack of urban land, and the only way to increase density is to simply build higher."

Shifts in population, environmental concerns and technological advancement make a strong argument for the future of tall buildings, yet for all his assertive pragmatism, Zaera Polo concedes that there is also a more intangible appeal to building on a grand scale. Referring to the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center (whose construction marked a pause in the race to build bigger and better buildings as the 1973 oil crisis instilled fears about the viability of the global economy) he claims that "their demise, which took place in an economy driven by information, seems to have convinced everyone again of the charisma that tall buildings command."

It's a provocative premise rather than a fully fledged theory and when we speak, Zaera-Polo is reluctant to elaborate on it. But even if the towers didn't directly inspire a new generation of skyscrapers, their destruction is evidence of the power that tall buildings hold over us. The images of the falling giants are infinitely more moving and memorable than the footage of the damage done to the Pentagon that day; their symmetrical dominance turned to a horrific vulnerability that had a deep psychological impact on the world.

In considering the psychology of tall buildings it's tempting to attribute their strange mystique to a universal phallic exuberance. True, the towers that soar up out of our cities possess an undeniable excess of human potency, yet the world's tallest buildings also carry with them a more subtle cultural symbolism. Hugely visible products of the times and places that produce them, our biggest buildings have the power to provoke unlikely responses from the people who gaze up at them.

Writing at the turn of the last century, journalist and novelist GK Chesterton described architecture as "the alphabet of giants; it is the largest set of symbols ever made to meet the eyes of men. A tower stands up like a sort of simplified statue of much more than heroic size." The size of buildings continues to impress, but the alphabet has expanded since Chesterton's day. The towers he wrote about were relatively simple and had correspondingly simple symbolism, they were an extension of the railways, the result of men learning to lay steel vertically rather than along the ground. If the railways were a practical way of spreading man's reach around the world however, the old model of building skyscrapers was an expensive boast, a way for the wealthy to assert themselves on the area around them.

These simple steel-based towers continued to dominate until the pause in tower building brought on by the oil crisis and even when the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia took the title of world's tallest building in 1998, they clearly owed much to the glamour of the Empire State Building. With the race back on, however, technology has rapidly advanced and new mixes of concrete and advanced computer programmes allow architects to construct ever more improbable shapes in the sky. Indeed, architects find themselves under pressure to produce iconic, media grabbing work for their clients, but far from encouraging innovation the resulting towers are becoming uniform in their pursuit of glass façades at unlikely angles.

With tall buildings more commonplace than ever, our response to them is becoming more critical, and it's telling that an old favourite like the Empire State Building remains popular today despite being dwarfed by several other structures. After all, merely being the tallest structure in the world is a relatively short-lived honour. Taiwan's Taipei 101, completed in 2005, is already being cast into the shade by the excitement coming out of the desert around Burj Dubai, due for completion next year when it will take the title for itself.

For a building to really capture the imagination, then it must incorporate some essential sense of what it encapsulates as a structure. Or, as Zaera Polo says, "We need to start thinking not as one offs, and we need to stop thinking, 'How do I look better?' Instead we need to start asking, 'What is this building truly doing?'" ■



WHITE MEN CAN JUMP

STEVE TRUGLIA IS TAKING STUNTS BEYOND THE BIG SCREEN INTO THE REACHES OF SPACE.

WORDS BY ED ANDREWS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY INFINITESKYDIVING COM

"I'm used to being in uncomfortable situations," says professional stunt co ordinator Steve Truglia "Like being on a cherry picker 100 feet above the ground in the middle of the night, covered in prosthetic make up being set on fire and having to jump onto an airbag you can't see because they put flood lights on you "

As a former Special Forces reservist for the TA Truglia first began working as a stuntman 12 years ago to keep an "element of danger" in his work In addition to working as a stunt performer in such Hollywood blockbusters as *Saving Private Ryan Tomorrow Never Dies* and *Entrapment* he also holds a number of physical accolades including the UK freediving record – descending 250 feet on a single breath in Loche Linnhe Scotland – and the world record for fastest abseil, for which he descended over 300 feet in 8 9 seconds from the Centre Point tower in London's West End

"I spent my life training to be a stuntman without knowing it " says Truglia Indeed it was his military training and childhood passion for outdoor adventure that gave him the necessary experience to be admitted onto the Equity Stunt Register and so be permitted to work in the UK This register requires any would-be performer to display competency up to instructor level in at least six different sports It is from here that lowly stunt professionals begin the long road to stunt co ordinators, responsible for the safety of both cast and crew as well as getting the opportunity to work behind the camera and direct the stunts themselves

It's in this role that Truglia finds himself today but he sees it more as an exercise in practical risk-assessment with every possible danger needing to be negated "When I go to work, I know there is a chance that I might not go home that night," he says soberly "but the rest of the cast and crew don't, so it's my responsibility to make sure that doesn't happen."

However this summer he is moving beyond the realm of celluloid to achieve what he describes as "the most exciting and extreme stunt challenge on earth " Truglia is attempting to break the world record for the highest ever parachute jump The existing record was set in 1960 by US Air Force pilot Joseph Kittinger at a stratospheric 102 800 feet (31,330 metres) – approximately three times the height of the flight path of a commercial airliner Truglia aims to break this by jumping from 120,000 feet

"I first started thinking about breaking this record about 15 years ago " he explains "but after some initial research, I soon realised that it would take a heck of a lot of money The spacesuits and balloons were prohibitively expensive and it would have taken a massive leap of faith from a sponsor to get involved " However, in the following years his work as a stunt co ordinator has given him the money to partly self fund the venture and more importantly, the credibility to approach sponsors to raise the estimated £2m needed At present, he still finds himself £250 000 short ▼

"A lot of people think I'm mad but I don't think I am by any stretch of the imagination," he says without a hint of doubt in his voice. "I do dangerous activities for a living. If I were at all mad, me and my team would be hurting ourselves but we are not. I've got a 100 per cent safety record. It is extremely dangerous but my job is to mitigate the risks as much as possible."

To help mitigate the multitude of fatal risks, Truglia has undertaken a huge amount of preparation and planning. And for good reason: this stunt has claimed the life of at least one person who attempted to break Kittinger's record. In 1966, an American, Nicholas Piantanida, suffered a fatal equipment malfunction on his ascent when his face mask blew out.

With this in mind, Truglia is leaving nothing to chance. Along with a huge number of skydives in his specially designed helmet and pressurised space suit, he is in the process of obtaining a balloon pilot's license that will permit him to guide the gas balloon gondola to the record breaking height – a height at which there is nothing but the black void of space above and the hazy curvature of the earth below. To test the durability of his spacesuit and life support systems at such an inhospitable altitude, he is undergoing tests in special hyperbaric chambers to simulate the low air pressure and the temperatures of minus 60°C. Such are the extremities of the conditions, every possible danger relating to the atmosphere, equipment and the freefall needs to be considered and countered against. "If there is the slightest tear in my suit, the effect would be similar to being boiled alive," he says frankly.

Ironically, even his life support system has the potential to kill him. During the jump, he will be breathing pure oxygen from inside his suit. Such is the flammability of the gas that a single static spark could kill him. Even an innocuous substance like sunscreen lotion, used to protect against the solar radiation at such an altitude, could combust.

The freefall itself will be fraught with danger. He's expected to descend without a parachute for around six minutes, reaching speeds of over 700mph and so breaking the sound barrier. At this speed, the slightest movement could lead to him spinning out of control and falling unconscious. For this, he will be required to hold his body in a position of stress, constantly pulling against the restrictive pressure suit.

But what makes someone want to put themselves through all this? While citing Harry Houdini as a major influence, Truglia puts his motivation down to an insatiable appetite as an experience seeker. "When I become interested in something new, I have to get good at it. I don't have to be the best at it, but I want the biggest experience I can get from it." It doesn't come much bigger than parachuting from space.

He approaches such activities with dry practicality, although he still remains humbled by the potential dangers. "I wouldn't be human if I wasn't scared," he admits, although he says this without a trace of fear in his voice. He puts this down to a mental strategy to cope with the dangers stemming from the purely practical work as a risk assessor. "In the end, I've got to be happy in my own mind that I've done enough to make the jump as safe as it can possibly be. Besides," he laughs, "once I'm up there, I can't bring the balloon back down – I won't have enough oxygen." ■

Check out www.stevetruglia.com to follow Steve's record-breaking attempt or contribute cash to the effort. We'll keep you updated on his progress at www.littlewhitelies.co.uk.



FROM THE ACADEMY AWARD®-NOMINATED WRITER OF **CITY OF GOD**



"FEROCIOUS, THRILLING AND EYE-OPENING... ONE OF 2008'S VERY BEST FILMS"

★★★★★

A FILM BY JOSÉ PADILHA

ELITE SQUAD

18

ON THE STREETS OF RIO ONLY THE ELITE SURVIVE.

WINNER GOLDEN BEAR BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL 2008

IN CINEMAS AUGUST 8

STUNT DRAFTING

EVERYBDDY HAS THEIR FAVOURITE STUNT, WHETHER A PRAT-FALL FROM A SILENT FILM, OR THE VERY LATEST IN MULTI-CAMERA CARNAGE. WE ASKED DEAN FORSTER, THE LEADING BRITISH STUNT CO-ORDINATOR WHO HAS WORKED ON FILMS INCLUDING *THE BDURNE ULTIMATUM* AND *MISSIDN: IMPOSSIBLE*, TO NAME WHAT HE CONSIDERS TO BE THE GREATEST STUNTS OF ALL TIME. WHAT FOLLOWS IS A UNIQUE VISUAL HOMAGE TO HIS CHOICES.





LEFT PAGE
***Saving Private Ryan* (1998)** Beach Landing Fire Stunts
Stunt Man: Various **Illustration:** Paul Willoughby

Spielberg's epic Omaha Beach landing, sees numerous soldiers set on fire during the fight.
Forster: "This wasn't just bog standard stuff. These are very difficult and dangerous stunts. This is the best fire work I've ever seen."

RIGHT PAGE
***Mission: Impossible* (1996)** Water Explosion
Stunt Man: Dean Forster **Illustration:** Andy Potts

Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise), a secret agent framed for murder, escapes by blowing up an aquarium as he leaps through a window.
Forster: "This is one of mine, but it's a great stunt. It's more for the movie than just for show, but it's still a very visual piece."

LEFT PAGE
***Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981):** Truck Drag
Stunt Man: Terry Leonard **Illustration:** Mark Tinplin

Inspired by a scene from *Stagecoach*, Indy is ejected from a truck and dragged behind before pulling himself along a rope and back inside to knock out the driver.
Forster: "This is a number of stunts in one, but it comes together brilliantly. The whole sequence is superb and really sums up what the *Indiana Jones* films are about."

RIGHT PAGE
***The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974):** Car Jump With Full Twist
Stunt Man: Bumps Willard **Illustration:** Sophie Henson

Bond, chasing his nemesis Scaramanga in an AMC Hornet X Hatchback Special Coupé, uses a broken bridge to corkscrew over a river and continue the chase.
Forster: "This is possibly the most technical. It's obviously very difficult to pull off, and there's little margin for error. It's a complete one-off."




007



то большая запруда



LEFT PAGE
***The Pink Panther* (1963)**, Fall Through Ceiling
Stunt Man: Dick Crockett **Illustration:** Amy Brown

The hapless Clouseau ends up falling through the floor of his apartment, then the floor below, then the next, watched impassively by the residents.
Forster: "This is really classy and really for the time, new. This is a different kind of stunt, which you don't see that often now. You wouldn't get time now to do anything like that. I think this is my favourite stunt."

RIGHT PAGE
***GoldenEye* (1995)**, Bungee Jump
Stunt Man: Wayne Michaels **Illustration:** Rob Longworth

In the opening sequence of Pierce Brosnan's first outing as Bond, he escapes a Russian military compound by bungee jumping 720 feet off the real-life Verzasca Dam in Switzerland.
Forster: "It's just superb. What a way to start the film. High falls are always very dangerous if something goes wrong, but they look amazing."

USE YOUR ILLUSION

AS FILMMAKERS UP THE ANTE, CGI IS INCREASINGLY REPLACING PHYSICAL STUNT WORK IN SEARCH OF EVER MORE ELABORATE ACTION SEQUENCES. BUT WITH CINEMA BECOMING MORE UNREAL THAN EVER, HOW IS THIS AFFECTING OUR MOVIE-WATCHING EXPERIENCE?

WORDS BY JAMES BRAMBLE

There is a scene in *Ed Wood* where the cross-dressing director is questioned about his attention to detail. "How 'bout that the policemen arrive in the daylight, but now it's suddenly night?" a producer asks. "What do you know? Haven't you ever heard of 'suspension of disbelief'?" Wood replies.

The suspension of disbelief – the willing seduction of an audience by unreality – is a concept that still inspires argument at the point where literature, film, psychology and philosophy meet. These arguments principally centre on the extent to which such suspension is conscious. Professor Carl Plantinga, an American philosopher who has written extensively on cognitive theory in relation to film, argues it is largely unconscious.

"If it's a fiction film, I think people pretty much assume that what they are seeing is not actually occurring and they have responses that are automatic," he says. "All those responses are tempered by a 'mental set', which is 'fiction' – 'I'm watching a movie.' Otherwise you really couldn't account for the way audiences go to see a film that has a protagonist that they sympathise with who is put in great danger, or who feels great pain."

The suspension of disbelief presumes a subconscious bond of trust between audience and film, that while the audience accepts that a film is not real, it should not have to work too hard to make believe that it is. But with the advent of CGI, and the demise of flesh and blood stunt or location work, this bond looks increasingly tenuous.

CGI's weaknesses are most sharply thrown into relief by franchise extensions or remakes, which consciously choose computer generated imagery over the traditional physical arts of stuntmen – the likes of *King Kong* and the digi-riddled *Star Wars* prequels, for instance. ▼

"CGI NOT ONLY CHA NGES THE WAY 'REALITY' IS DEPIC TED BUT, IN FLAUNTING ARTIFIC IALITY, ENTIRELY NEGATES THE NEED FOR THE 'REAL'."

These films, and many others like them, showcase the unreal smoothness of CGI which, while it may only be the result of short term technological limitation, remains intrusive to our experience. Thus, CGI not only changes the way 'reality' is depicted but, in flaunting artificiality, entirely negates the need for the 'real'. In this context, why should an audience bother to sympathise with 'great danger' or 'great pain' at all? In other words, the advent of CGI has fundamentally changed the nature of our relationship with cinema. Where once we thrilled at the physical feats of brave stuntmen, rapt in the experience of real danger – however carefully stage managed – CGI leaves no room for illusions. Both audience and filmmakers are safe: safe in the knowledge that we are safe from harm. Safe but cocooned. Safe but bored.

The term 'suspension of disbelief' was coined by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his autobiography, *Biographia Literaria*. Coleridge wrote that previously published work of his had striven towards "a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith."

While Coleridge sweated with pen and opium pipe to evoke the transcendent power of the supernatural, the means at his disposal were minimal compared to the sheer range of mind bending stimuli available to the filmmaker. This, according to Plantinga, gives the visual arts a uniquely powerful route to the subconscious.

"I think one of the reasons that film and television are so good at conveying a sense of danger is that they don't communicate linguistically but with images and sounds. They tap into a lot of spectators' real world perceptual processes, which are hardwired to give certain types of responses," he says. "For example, the startled response. Darwin talked about going to a zoo, he knew that there was glass between the adder and himself in the zoo, but when the adder struck at the glass he couldn't help but flinch. Films play into or take advantage of those natural perceptive processes in a way that literature can't."

Early narrative cinema, having achieved shock value through presenting the everyday as realistically as possible, quickly evolved to seeking visceral thrills through just such cinematic adder strikes – Keaton narrowly avoiding being flattened by a falling gable, Harold Lloyd hanging from a clock, or *The Great Train Robbery*'s final shot directly at the audience.

It has been argued that this need for cinematic danger continues to satisfy an inherent primordial desire of the human subconscious, as Plantinga explains: "Many psychologists and philosophers have thought that ever since we have become 'civilised' a lot of the danger and the inherent excitement of everyday life has been taken away from us. Movies are one way that people can experience this sense of excitement in a very safe environment."

For stunt co-ordinators such as Andy Armstrong, making an audience believe that the danger is 'real' – that act of securing their poetic faith – is an art in itself. Armstrong was stunt co-ordinator for films such as *I, Robot*, *Universal Soldier*, *Stargate* and *Total Recall*, while his brother Vic was a stuntman on, among many others, the first three *Indiana Jones* films. They both pride themselves on not just delivering thrills but integrating their work into the narrative.

"My brother and I have both tried to make it a bit of a calling card that we try to work out what the character is, who he is, and how much they are capable of," explains Andy. "It's nice when the stunt that they perform is completely in keeping with that character. That's why films like *Bullitt* are completely believable, because you buy into the character. Personally I am a little bit bored with superhero movies when, if in doubt, they give them another skill."

However, while the Armstrong brothers fight the good fight for 'motivated' stunt action, CGI has added an extra level of difficulty. "A problem now is that people are so well educated, if not in the exact technicalities then in the possibilities of things that can be achieved with computer-assisted effects," says Andy. "It's very hard to wow an audience with, 'Holy shit, that was cool!' The immediate window that opens in their mind is: 'Yeah, that was cool but it was obviously a trick!'"

Perhaps one of the unintended beneficiaries of the loss of faith has been the documentary. For James Marsh, director of *Man on Wire*, the power of documentary filmmaking partly lies in the ability to offer realism in an age where narrative filmmaking is more concerned with shaking its technological tail feathers. "When I see a big, splashy film, I know that it's all virtual," he says, "and when I see a Michel Gondry film, you know that it's all real. *Man on Wire* is the same kind of idea: it's all real. There's one or two visual effects in the film but they're only trying to get you into the reality of what you're experiencing."

"I think there's quite a few really powerful documentaries that are going to come out over the course of the next year," he continues, "and perhaps that's in some way either a backlash or a response to that lack of belief in CGI – real stories and real emotions that you can't argue with because you're seeing them unfold."

Plantinga, while admitting that his own cinematic enjoyment is frequently impaired by CGI, stresses that the mental set for the appreciation of fiction and non-fiction is fundamentally distinct. As CGI improves, and new generations become used to its perfections, he believes its power to provide our fiction craving mental set with believable narrative kicks will be immense, even if it is never completely realistic.

"To me, it's a question of perceptual realism. By that, I would differentiate between perceptual realism and ontological realism. Perceptual realism only requires that what is seen or mimicked causes the spectator to see or hear things in ways that are very close to how they see or hear things outside the movie theatre. It doesn't require that it be realistic in any other sense than that it seems real. I think CGI is going to become quite powerful in that sense as it's perfected."

There is a certain irony, not to mention snobbery, in decrying CGI as an unwelcome guest, defiling the sacred arts of costume, model making and stunt acting. After all, many films have set their stall on stunts and effects that have been as distracting and unmotivated as Ed Wood's cops suddenly arriving from day to night. And yet, watch *Hulk* or *Spider-Man* or any other feast of CGI onanism, and it remains a legitimate criticism that there is little interest, little empathy, in the dangers faced by a digitally rendered, three dimensional representation of geometric data.

In the paragraph following Coleridge's definition of poetic faith and the suspension of disbelief, he wrote in praise of his friend and collaborator, William Wordsworth, that he sought to achieve a heightened appreciation of what might otherwise appear the mundane. Does CGI cinema at its best pursue the very same?

"Awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes that see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand." ■

A LWLies review will not be inhibited by any perceived rules. Just as movies are about more than the two hours you spend sitting in the cinema, our reviews are a chance to talk about much more than the immediate experience of the film in question. There are many different aspects of the movie-going experience and we will embrace them all.

Anticipation

Ever waited six months for a box-office behemoth? Read a book that you loved and nervously watched the adaptation? Been pleasantly surprised by an off the radar indie gem? Anticipation plays a crucial role in your reaction to a movie. Rather than ignore it, we think it should be measured and acknowledged as part of the movie-going experience.

Marked out of 5

Enjoyment

All other things aside, how did you feel for those two hours? Were you glued to your seat? Did the film speak to your soul? Was it upsetting, disappointing, or just plain boring? Were you even awake?

Marked out of 5.

In Retrospect

Great movies live with you; you carry them around wherever you go and the things they say shape the way you see the world. Did this movie fade away or was every moment burned into your retinas? Was it a quick fix action flick, good for a rainy Sunday afternoon? Or the first day of the rest of your life? Did you hate it with a fury only to fall in love with a passion? Or did that first love dram away like a doomed romance?

Marked out of 5.

CHAPTER FOUR IN WHICH WE REVIEW THE LATEST FILM RELEASES



ELITE SQUAD

DIRECTED BY José Padilha
STARRING Wagner Moura,

In 2002, *City of God* threw a public spotlight on the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro – shantytowns governed by the guns and narcotics of rival drug gangs. *Elite Squad* revisits this volatile territory but this time our focus lies not with the dealers, but with the 'law-abiding' powers that be.

We may be following the boys in blue – or fascist black, as it happens – but audiences looking for a more nutritious source of moral fibre will be sorely disappointed. Our titular 'squad' is BOPE – a brutally efficient military police group that acts as Brazil's answer to the SAS. Human rights aren't a major priority for these guys – they put bags over heads, bullets into backs, and brooms up the arses of uncooperative witnesses. *The Bill* this is not.

Jose Padilha's film is set in 1997, in the weeks leading up to a Papal visit. The Pope needs BOPE, but their commandar, Nascimento (Wagner Moura), has bigger problems: he's about to become a father and wishes to retire, but first he must find a worthy successor. Two candidates stand out, yet they both have flaws. Neto (Caio Junqueira) is too eager to play Rambo, while the bookish Matias (Andre Ramiro) is too reluctant to pull his trigger. What's a thuggish super-cop to do?

Elite Squad is not a happy film. The picture painted by Padilha and his crew is relentlessly bleak: the everyday cops are hopelessly corrupt, the dealers are satanic and BOPE themselves are more than happy to use torture to achieve their goals. But a special vein of scorn is reserved for Rio's middle-class students, presented as naïve potheads who spout Foucault between tokes, funding the canker that rots their city from within. There's a valid point made here, but there's something decidedly uncomfortable about the way these kids are used to justify the *Judge Dredd*-like behaviour of the film's dubious heroes.

There was a spat of mild controversy when *Elite Squad* won the Golden Bear in Berlin last year, and it's not hard to see why. It's a very well crafted piece of work, boasting a bruising intensity and some strong performances from the leads. Yet it also lacks the humanity of *City of God* – and this absence undermines our engagement with what we see. As yet more violence unfolds before us – accompanied by gung-ho rock guitars – it's hard to respond with anything more than nausea. The film's politics will certainly make you think – but only after the fact, once a bellyful of beatings have been digested and excreted. Neon Kelly

Anticipation.
Controversy or no, a Golden Bear winner is always worth a look. Four

Enjoyment
Exciting, but deeply unpleasant. As gritty as eating a big bowl of grit, with Sacrochips on top. Three

In Retrospect
Provocative stuff, but you won't want a second helping. Three



Canadian auteur Guy Maddin gives *LWLies* a peek through his own crazy looking glass.

LWLies: What are you trying to portray with *My Winnipeg*?
Maddin: I would like to portray the dreamy, emotional, discombobulating connection we all have with our home and take the viewer into a space in their own hearts where they can make some sort of connection with their own home

LWLies: Is the duality between clear and surreal moments in the film somehow a reflection of your hometown?
Maddin: Everyone in Winnipeg that I've shown the movie to identifies with it instantly. There are the sleepwalkers – some of them are literally sleepwalkers and some of them just seem like it, and they're not quite sure where they are. It's the sheer hours and days and weeks of darkness and cold. Luminous ice just piles up until you can't remember what it's like to be well. You can't really remember what it's like to be fully awake. Maybe it's some SAD [Seasonal Affective Disorder] effect or our isolation. It feels like you've been left out in the back yard for weeks on end as the winter goes on and you need to tell each other stories to get through it

LWLies: Are all your musings intended to be fully understood?
Maddin: They're just sort of 'out there'. I don't ever want to be considered a wanker or a self-fluffer – I prefer that [latter] term – I have to stand by what I say. A lot of them are feelings, phrases or anecdotes that suggest moods. There's no real right answer to anything. I don't want anyone to try and solve this movie

LWLies: You're influenced by early silent film aren't you?
Maddin: I like piling as many options onto my pallet. What I like about silent film is that it's so aggressively artificial – a couple of really big steps away from literary-minded naturalism. It's clearly a couple of steps closer to fairy tales or ballet or opera

LWLies: And you also take inspiration from propaganda films from the Weimar Republic and Soviet Union.
Maddin: Propaganda always amuses me because I like to think that it never fooled me – I like to think that it fooled other people. But then I realised that I'm just as big a dupe as anyone else. I've been believing the evening news every night for my entire life. Propaganda is everywhere and so now I'm utterly amused but terrified by it, so it's fun for me to manipulate that.

LWLies: If someone offered you buckat loads of cash to make a Hollywood blockbuster would you say 'yes'?
Maddin: You know, I would if I felt I could make the script my own somehow. It sounds kind of artsy, but if the movie was trying to say something I felt I could agree with, or if I could just lather some of my DNA on it, yeah I'd take it. So, please, bring those buckets now! **Ed Stocker**

MY WINNIPEG

DIRECTED BY Guy Maddin
STARRING Ann Savage

All aboard! It's time

for a trip on Guy Maddin's weird and wonderful steam train. *My Winnipeg* sees the Canadian director return with a bizarre often hyper-surreal 80-minute ode to his hometown, using the metaphor of travelling through town by rail – apparently on his way out forever – as a way of reaching deep into the fuzzy bits of his memory, exploring nostalgia, yearning and emotion.

Of course, this being Maddin, the documentary is far from conventional. He's long been inspired by silent movies (he's shot a few himself), plus the propaganda films of the Weimar Republic and Soviet Russia. Mixing archival footage with re-enactment – and with a dramatic commentary from Maddin himself – *My Winnipeg* contains all the traits for which he's renowned. These include the faux-amateur trick of removing a bit of film from a completed shot and splicing it back together, as well as Chaplin-era title cards – often so rapid they're quasi-subliminal. As the train chugs its way through town, panning snowy streets as the driver stokes the coal-fired engine, we could be in a Stalinist movie.

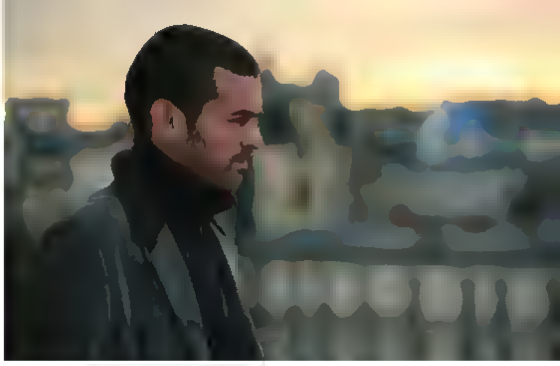
The dialogue is as much of a mishmash, alternating between dream-like musings featuring intermittent flashes of sexual imagery and more coherent snippets of family history. Making constant reference to sleepiness and sleep-walking, Maddin goes some way to capturing what it's like to live in this icy, isolated metropolis. The filmmaker's trance-like rambles around his consciousness are countered with occasional, lucid moments of waking when the film turns to colour and Maddin shares more concrete facts about strange Winnipeg civic laws; his mother's beauty parlour; his father's hockey background; his vexation at the local government's insistence on bulldozing historical buildings.

Maddin may not be everyone's cup of tea – there's more than just a hint of Luis Buñuel in his work and it's pretty weird stuff. Certainly, if you like your movies linear then he's not for you. But you've got to admire the gall of the man. *My Winnipeg* is a film to experience rather than rationalise. Look at it this way and everything begins to make sense. Well, sort of, anyway. **Ed Stocker**

Anticipation:
Wimni-who? The title ain't lighting anybody's fire. Two

Enjoyment: **There's a lot going on here and it's pretty whacky stuff. Three**

In Retrospect:
Hats off to Maddin for daring to be different. Retro respect. Four



PARIS

DIRECTED BY Cédric Klapisch
STARRING Juliette Binoche, Romain Duris, Fabrice Luchini

In *Paris*, the point is life. The point is that the humdrum *petit minutiae* of a city – its moans and groans, its stresses and mundanity – are a metaphor for each and every one of us, getting stuck in our day-to-day, losing the bigger picture, losing ourselves.

Pierre (Romain Duris) sees that bigger picture. He has a fatal heart condition, needs a new one, and there is his sister Élise (Juliette Binoche), bemoaning the fact that she's a single mother at 40. He tells her to wake up, see how much she's got going for her, and she does.

This collage of Parisians – Pierre and Élise, brothers Roland (Fabrice Luchini) and Philippe (François Cluzet), and the people whose lives they touch – derive self-realisation from the architecture of the city. Fate is in there too: how death, the threat of death and sudden death throw life into relief. How observation of detail does that too: four green bins symmetrically lined up on the street below, the feel of hot coffee between your hands.

Such objectification shows us how to find beauty in small pleasures and yet simultaneously serves as the film's failing. Director Cedric Klapisch's desire to defamiliarise causes loss of identification and intimacy – in the same way that the repeated motif of characters with their backs to us essentially severs connection.

A film about a failing heart mustn't forget to keep its own humanity, and *Paris* is at its most exhilarating when Duris takes his failing body and tries to dance. It evokes Shakespeare's "When you do dance, I wish you a wave o' the sea, that you might ever do nothing but that," and embodies life in all its splendour. **Lorien Haynes**

Anticipation. After *Paris je t'aime*, this is the city of love lost. Two

Enjoyment. Comes and goes. Will occasionally make you feel like popping out for a caffe latte. Two

In Retrospect. Has a haunting quality that stays with you. Three



CSNY DEJA VU

DIRECTED BY Neil Young
STARRING David Crosby, Graham [illegible]

US troops are overseas fighting a controversial war and hippie favourites Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young are on stage singing protest songs. It could be Woodstock, 1969. Except it isn't. It's 2006, and as if to demonstrate the cruelty of the intervening years, a white-haired Stephen Stills has just accidentally stumbled off the front of the stage, mid-guitar solo, like your drunken, geriatric grandad after a hip operation.

Neil Young's latest documentary, *CSNY Deja Vu*, follows the reformed CSNY (average age: 62) as they tour Young's protest album, *Living With War*, across America. We soon discover that Stephen Stills' sense of balance isn't the only thing that's deteriorated over the years. In the wake of 9/11, speaking up against the war or the President has become a blood sport for American entertainers, something The Dixie Chicks recorded in their similar documentary, *Dixie Chicks: Shut up and Sing*. Young's decision to unleash his new song 'Let's Impeach The President' on an unsuspecting redneck audience in Atlanta, Georgia, is therefore impressively brave. Or stupid. Either way, watching a sea of mullets simultaneously quiver with patriotic rage is one of the film's chief spectacles.

It's heart, however, comes from the involvement of war reporter Mike Cerre, whose experiences in Vietnam provide the been-there, done-that credibility that your long-haired musician types lack. It's thanks to Cerre that, however pure his filmmaking motivations might be, Young manages to avoid a sense of Bono-like self-canonisation. Cerre's interviews with the victims of war are interspersed with performance and archive footage – and it's these voices – an AWOL soldier in hiding in Canada, a mother whose son was killed by friendly fire and an Iraq veteran running for Congress – that transform *CSNY Déjà Vu* from your average ego-driven rockumentary into something both moving and intelligent. **Ellen E Jones**

Anticipation. Past it rockers on tour? Can't say we're that enthused. Two

Enjoyment. It might not have anything new to say, but what it does say, it says well. Four

In Retrospect. This rockumentary hybrid is a welcome addition to the anti-war doc canon. If you like the music, even better. Four



THE BANISHMENT

DIRECTED BY Andrei Zvyagintsev
STARRING Konstantin Lavronenko, Mariya Bonnevie

Andrei Zvyagintsev

follows up *The Return*, his widely acclaimed and Golden Lion-winning Russian road movie, with another hypnotically beautiful and emotionally captivating tale of a loving marriage undone by masculine pride. A collaborative adaptation between Oleg Negin, Artyom Melkumian and Zvyagintsev from William Saroyan's short story *The Laughing Matter* (though only the bare bones are used), it allows the director ample scope to display his skills as a master of mood and ambiguity.

After a 12-year absence, married couple Alex (Konstantin Lavronenko) and Vera (Bergman veteran Maria Bonnevie) leave their industrial home and return with their two children to the remote country house owned by Alex's father. The home, though modest in appearance, is located in a seemingly idyllic spot, nestled amidst rolling hills, walnut trees and fertile land. Back in the city is Alex's brother Mark (Aleksandr Baluyev), whose dubious credentials and nefarious lifestyle are suggested by the gunshot wound he sports in his arm. When Vera makes an unforeseen confession, Alex, a man from a family pre-disposed towards fracture and heartache, faces a moral dilemma. But in enlisting his brother's help, he unleashes a tragic and unstoppable chain of events.

Illuminating the dark soul of the Russian male, *The Banishment* is stunning in both conception and execution. Establishing from the very outset a foreboding and suffocating sense of inevitability and dread, the film's relocation from a grey and rain-sodden milieu to more open surroundings (Belgium, northern France and Moldova provide the film's locations) only temporarily alleviates the feeling that something very grave is about to occur. The return to the city astonishingly realised, offers grim confirmation. Zvyagintsev describes his film as being about "kind, beautiful people in the tragic circumstances of hopelessness," and it is difficult to conjure a more accurate and articulate précis.

The Banishment is magnificently shot by Mikhail Krichman, the cinematographer on *The Return*, and a collaborator described by the director as his "comrade in arms", while the soundtrack is equally impressive and expressive. Combining the work of Andrei Dergachyov and Arvo Pärt – the Estonian composer whose work regularly appears in the films of Carlos Reygadas – the use of score and music is equally evocative of David Lynch and Aleksandr Sokurov. Compellingly presented and performed by an ensemble cast in which Maria Bonnevie, the only non-Russian, marginally shades the acting honours, this is filmmaking of the highest order. **Jason Wood**

Anticipation – ***The Return* is one of the modern masterpieces of Russian cinema. Five**

Enjoyment – **A hypnotic and mesmerising work that is as emotionally resonant as it is technically brilliant. Four**

In Retrospect – **One frequently experiences the sensation that this is what cinema was invented for. Four**

Grabbing some words with French maestro Olivier Assayas.

LWLies: How did you become interested in the story of *Summer Hours*?

Assayes: It started as a project to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Musée d'Orsay. The head of the Musee d'Orsay would've been happy if there was one shot of the museum in your story, like in the Godard movie where people just run through the Louvre [*Bande a Part*, 1961], but I took the notion of making a movie in a museum seriously. For me, it all boiled down to how art starts with life, and the relationship between humans and their perception of reality, and it dies in a museum. The project didn't happen, but the idea has stayed with me.

LWLies: You've also said that you think it's your most Taiwanese film.

Assayes: Yes, in the sense that this kind of de-dramatised view of the passing of time is kind of Taiwanese and I was using broader shots. My relationship with Taiwanese cinema is to do with the fact that I've been very close to people like Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Edward Yang, since we basically started making movies more or less at the same time. Hou was involved in the same Musée d'Orsay project and it's where his movie, *Flight of the Red Balloon*, came from.

LWLies: There's a difference in the way the characters feel about the objects that make up their inheritance. Which point of view is closest to your own?

Assayes: I'm a writer, so I suppose I have to relate to every single one of my characters, but for me this film involved being able to represent my own contradictions. I think I'm a little bit more like Frederic, the Charles Berling character, because I believe that we have some responsibility to whatever has made us the person we are. At the same time, I am like Adrienne, the Juliette Binoche character, and I just believe that our past is the things we use to project ourselves into the future. But I think we're all like that. We are all in a way nostalgic for the past, but we don't want that past to drag us backwards, we want to go ahead. That's what life is about. It's a conflict, but I think it's a conflict we pretty much all share.

LWLies: Looking back over your career, which of your achievements makes you most proud?

Assayes: I think when you make movies, the greatest achievement is just to be able to keep on making films. To be able to protect your freedom of making your own films, which is actually not very easy. I've always managed to make the movies I wanted to make, when I wanted to make them and how I wanted to make them, even if it involved working with a smaller budget, but I did manage to protect some sort of freedom and I'm kind of proud of that. **Ellen E Jones**

Look for the full transcript of this interview at www.littlewhitelies.co.uk



For a French film

director, Olivier Assayas hasn't been very interested in France lately. His last few films have taken the audience on cross-continental excursions (from London to Hong Kong in *Boarding Gate*) and involved dialogue in several languages (English and Cantonese in *Clean*). With *Summer Hours*, however, he has returned to the heart of middle-class French life.

Following the death of their mother, three forty-something siblings must divide her estate, a task made complicated by several valuable antiques and some clashing personalities. Eldest brother, Frederic (Assayas regular Charles Berling) wants to preserve their mother's legacy; Adrienne (a blonde Juliette Binoche) is keen to unburden herself of the past, while businessman Jérémie (Jérémie Renier) wants to flog it all to fund his family's new life in Shanghai.

For Assayas, a prop is never just a prop, and indeed his latest film's preoccupation with paintings and vases questions the place of art in human lives and how we incorporate the past in our present. But for all that his direction lavishes as much attention on the minutiae of family interaction as it does on Bracquamond glasswork, his detached eye creates characters who interest the intellect while alienating the emotions. When Frédéric breaks down crying over his mother's death, the camera peers at him from the other side of his car window before pulling back up the road, as if retreating to a polite distance.

Perhaps that's because, in thrall to the Taiwanese New Wave, Assayas refuses to contrive any dramatic confrontations. Or it might simply be that his characters' biggest problem is which priceless painting to sell first, and as such they are a difficult family to care about. As a result, *Summer Hours* is undoubtedly a triumph of realism, it's just rather a dull one. **Ellen E Jones**

Anticipation. **It's hard to know what to expect from a genre chameleon like Assayas. Three**

Enjoyment. **Lots to think about, but the thrills of *Boarding Gate* and the emotion of *Clean* are conspicuously absent. Three**

In Retrospect. **Assayas is a fascinating filmmaker who has made a difficult film to like. Two**



CRAZY LOVE

DIRECTED BY [illegible]
STARRING Burt Pugach

Dan Klores' *Crazy Love*

Love tells the sometimes astonishing story of the intense, roller-coaster relationship between Burt Pugach, a prosperous, married 32-year-old lawyer and Linda Riss a beautiful 20-year-old girl living in the Bronx.

Pugach and Riss became an American tabloid sensation in 1959 when Pugach, a highly intelligent but manipulative and obsessive individual, was driven to jealous violence by Riss' engagement to another man. Their operatic entanglement of emotional extremes from the shocking to the ridiculous, has provided regular fodder to the American media ever since.

With the co-operation of Burt, now 79, and Linda, 68, the film examines the darker parts of the human psyche in relation to love, obsession, insanity, hope and forgiveness.

A warped morality tale that is both redemptive and depressing in equal measure, *Crazy Love* is ultimately a tale of two extraordinary people choosing to survive by any means necessary. Like *Capturing the Friedmans*, the film adopts a neutral stance to its subjects, letting the viewer draw their own conclusions from the subjective evidence gleaned from its interviewees.

However, while that film had at its core a possible miscarriage of justice, *Crazy Love* has only two damaged individuals, locked in a strange cycle of co-dependency. If the film has a fault, it's that it is hard to feel much sympathy for its protagonists. **James Bramble**

Anticipation
Another tale of dysfunctional love. Three

Enjoyment
An intelligent, dispassionate approach to obsession. Three

In Retrospect
Leaves you uplifted, deflated and strangely cold. Three

LWLies gets a little crazy with Dan Klores.

LWLies: Can you tell us about how the film came about?
Klores: There was an article in *The New York Times* that sort of jogged my memory. I was about nine or 10-years-old but I remember the headlines and the horror of it. I realised there was a good story here – it was about New Yorkers, it was about love, it was about obsession. And then I called Burt. I had lunch with him and Linda and that's how it started. Then I began to learn more about the obsession and love, and it really attracted me. What would compel someone to commit such a heinous act? What would compel someone to marry that person?

LWLies: Were they at all reluctant to participate?
Klores: No they weren't reluctant. They were two elderly people living in this one bedroom apartment that they have had for years and clearly they each suffer from different types of emotional illnesses. They were very open. It took me a long time but I got them to be very, very open.

LWLies: You'd imagine Burt might want to disappear into obscurity rather than be on the news all over again.
Klores: Yes, if you were to judge him under the sense of normalcy, but he's not. He suffers from pathological behaviour. So whereas you or I would want to never be seen again, not him at all. I mean, this is a man of immense need who has a very high IQ. It is very difficult for him to see the world similarly to a normal person at all.

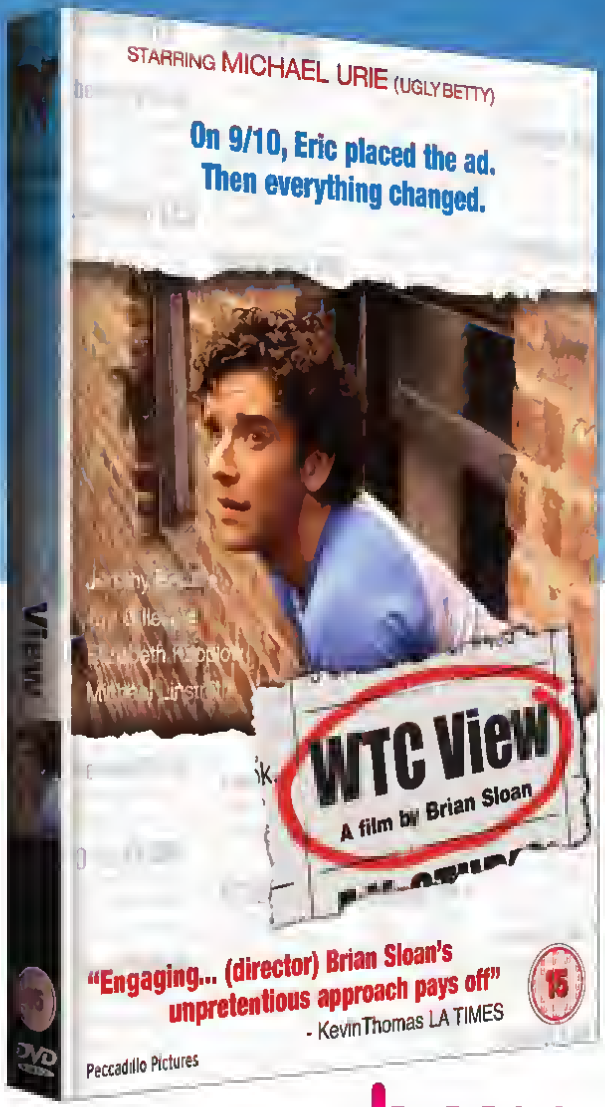
LWLies: The documentary is fairly non-judgemental. Did you ever find it difficult to maintain that stance?
Klores: Oh yes, I still do. It's a struggle. I have my feelings and my conclusions but I didn't feel like it was my role to make it obvious in the film. You have to try not to say outright that he is an absolutely evil and disgusting person. I have to constantly reach back and try to understand what happened to him. But nevertheless, I find his actions unforgivable. Which is not to say that I think her decisions are forgivable.

LWLies: He doesn't really express remorse for what he did to her. Do you think he genuinely feels sorry?
Klores: Well, the answer's not simple. Almost all people, if you do something to hurt someone else, you can express a true feeling of remorse. Burt's sorry that he did it because he messed up his own life. With Burt, Burt comes first, second and third.

LWLies: Did you feel yourself falling into his trap, being charmed by him?
Klores: Never. Not during making the film, afterwards maybe because his obsessive behaviour helps to define him. He would call me two, three times a day and say, 'What's happening with the film?' **James Bramble**

Check out the full transcript of this interview at www.lwlies.co.uk.

"An excellent film…
Funny, sad, and ultimately quite touching" Philadelphia Gay News
"Clever camera work and a snappy script" 3SIXTY
"Finely wrought drama" Filmcritic.com



WTC View

Written and directed by
Brian Sloan

Starring
Michael Urie (Ugly Betty)

Jeremy Beazlie
Jay Gillespie
Elizabeth Kapplow
Michael Linstroth

www.peccapics.com

OUT ON DVD 21 JULY

hmv
hmv.com

BABY MAMA



The idea behind

Baby Mama, in which a 37-year-old single woman has a baby on her own, is a great one. And it sees a marriage of top American female comedy talents Tina Fay and Amy Poehler, alongside *Saturday Night Live* writer-now director, Michael McCullers. You're thinking: go girls! This one's for the women and not a Will Ferrell or Adam McKay in sight.

Sadly, what you get is a re-run of feminism in the 1980s; women becoming men, playing the male game instead of to their own gender specific strengths, spouting every cliché in the book. *Baby Mama* is a film of predictability and sexism.

So Tina Fey, a powerhouse business chick with great pins, starts seeing dancing babies and has exhausted adoption, IVF and sperm donors by the end of the opening credits. She opts for surrogacy and ends up with white trash Amy Poehler sleeping in her bed, peeing in her sink and consuming a diet of Red Bull, smokes and *American Idol*. This woman has never drunk water, eaten a carrot or heard of her perineum. And why you'd pay $100,000 for her to carry your kid. God only knows.

While Fey 'educates' Poehler and falls for juice maker Greg Kinnear, it becomes clear that *Baby Mama* is pulling a fast one – Fey will soon be bone fide impregnated and they'll all end up laughing in the soft play area.

At 16, Juno MacGuff had a better idea of how to handle life – with archness and humanity – than this attempt at *Knocked Up* with women. And given the middle of the road material, it's left to the odd dependables, Sigourney Weaver and Steve Martin, to carry the can (the film's stand out scene sees Martin's new age guru rewarding Fey with "five minutes of uninterrupted eye contact").

While still likely to be a crowd pleaser with a handful of funny scenes, *Baby Mama* could also have explored the stigma of surrogacy, and given Fey and Poehler a proper vehicle. What you get is a wasted opportunity. **Lorien Haynes**

Anticipation. **Should be shit but funny.** Four

Enjoyment. **Spurts of uncontrollable laughter, then disappointment.** Two

In Retrospect. **What was it about again?** One

THE MIST



Frank Darabont

returns to directing after a six-year absence to tread familiar ground with another Stephan King adaptation, this time with *The Mist*.

After a thunderstorm destroys part of their house, painter David Drayton (Thomas Jane) and his young son Billy head down to the local supermarket to get some supplies. They are met by a whole town of frenzied shoppers spooked by a power cut, and a petrified and bloodied old man ranting about creatures in the strange mist that has descended.

As the terrified townsfolk hole up in the supermarket, the usual, formulaic characters emerge from the woodwork – the annoying woman freaking out, the cynical black man playing the race card and the caustic redneck calling everyone 'pussies' all put in an appearance. These cardboard cutouts then proceed to drop clangers so awful that the only horror on display is the script (penned by Darabont himself), a script that then demands a huge suspension of disbelief to accept that people would choose to abandon the food, shelter and medical supplies offered by the supermarket to take their chances in the monster-ridden fog that lurks outside.

Despite such conspicuous flaws, *The Mist* just manages not to go the way of Bernard Matthews by taking an anthropological twist as the veneer of civilised society is stripped away by fear and panic. Marcia Gay Harden puts in a solid performance as the fire and brimstone Christian, wet for the apocalypse and recruiting penitents to offer Billy up as a sacrifice to appease God's wrath. Toby Jones also does his career no harm as the head-strong, sharp-shooting checkout assistant, sticking it to monsters, manic shoppers and his officious boss alike.

It's not until David and his mates escape from the fanatics that the film manages to put aside its initial shortcomings. The refreshingly unconventional conclusion helps to redeem the sporadically cross script ludicrous context and special effects that look like they were rendered on a ZX Spectrum. But it's not enough to stop you reflecting on how standards have slipped. **Ed Andrews**

Anticipation. **Darabont and King together again.** Four

Enjoyment. **A clichéd horror-by-numbers until BAM! Two**

In Retrospect. **Whoa, never saw that coming! Nice.** Three

HEAVY METAL IN BAGHDAD

DIRECTED BY Suroosh Alvi, Eddy Moretti
STARRING Faisal Talal, Tony Aziz, Mike el Plyak



The story of Iraq's only heavy metal band is a window into a country in freefall

In Suroosh Alvi and Eddy Moretti's gutsy documentary

Inspired by Alvi's original *Vice* magazine article, *Heavy Metal in Baghdad* follows the unlikely journey of Acrassicauda, four twenty-something metal heads struggling to keep their band together in the wake of the invasion

Shaky-cam footage shows them singing pro-Saddam songs as a condition of performing at a pre-war gig, where moshing is outlawed because it looks like a Jewish prayer But that's nothing compared to conditions in an occupied country Stray rockets destroy their practice space, power cuts and body searches disrupt their only gig, while the insurgents make death-threats to anybody wearing a Westernised T-shirt or rocking a mullet

Throughout all this, Alvi and Moretti doggedly stayed with the story, tracking the band down in-country (fully equipped with body armour and several truckloads of guards), despite the fact that it was risky for any Iraqis to be seen in the company of Western journalists

If there's nothing new about the message that Iraq has gone to shit, it's still rare to be reminded by young Iraqis themselves Their testimony – unmediated and expletive-fuelled – gives the film its sense of authenticity What we see is the battle between hope and despair that is played out every day alongside the shooting war Caught in the cross fire, all the civilian population can do is watch their lives sink further and further down the toilet.

The film eventually follows the band to Syria where Alvi plays excerpts from the footage he has shot so far All of them break down in tears.

You might not think you can stomach another Iraq War film, but this isn't the usual polemic It's an intimate record of a generation in crisis; uplifting, darkly funny and urgently alive Matt Bochenski

Anticipation. Great premise and festival recognition Three

Enjoyment. Powerful and necessary, if rough around the edges Three

In Retrospect Not just another Iraq War doc Three

WALL-E

DIRECTED BY Andrew Stanton
STARRING Ben Burtt, Jeff Garlin



Mankind is suicidal.

And as we consume ourselves into an oblivion of obesity and rampant capitalism, we're taking the earth down with us That, says Pixar, should really seal the deal It's a dark message delivered by *WALL-E*, but necessary nonetheless

The year is 2700 and earth lies deserted, buried beneath a majestic pile of manmade crap Flexing its monopolistic muscles, corporate goliath 'Buy 'n' Large' has sent everyone into outer space while a taskforce of robots works on a global clean up But that was 700 years ago and too indolent to give half-a-shit, the powers that be turned off all the robots and left the world to rot All the robots, that is, except one

WALL-E the only good thing created by humans, dutifully chips away at our mess with heart-wrenching naivety Collecting knick-knacks from 'the age of man', his bewitching curiosity is a powerful statement what good is 'stuff' when we're long gone?

But this is Pixar, and Pixar means hope Educated by classic movies on VHS, WALL-E has evolved into a romantic – nothing like the humans we later meet who, too lazy to move, think or reach out to one another, have atrophied into bulbous masses of self-indulgent blubber Now he longs for love And with the arrival of EVE, a robot sent to seek out signs of life, he finally has something to desire. What follows is a poignant reminder that no amount of buy, buy, buy, can satisfy our most basic need: human connection

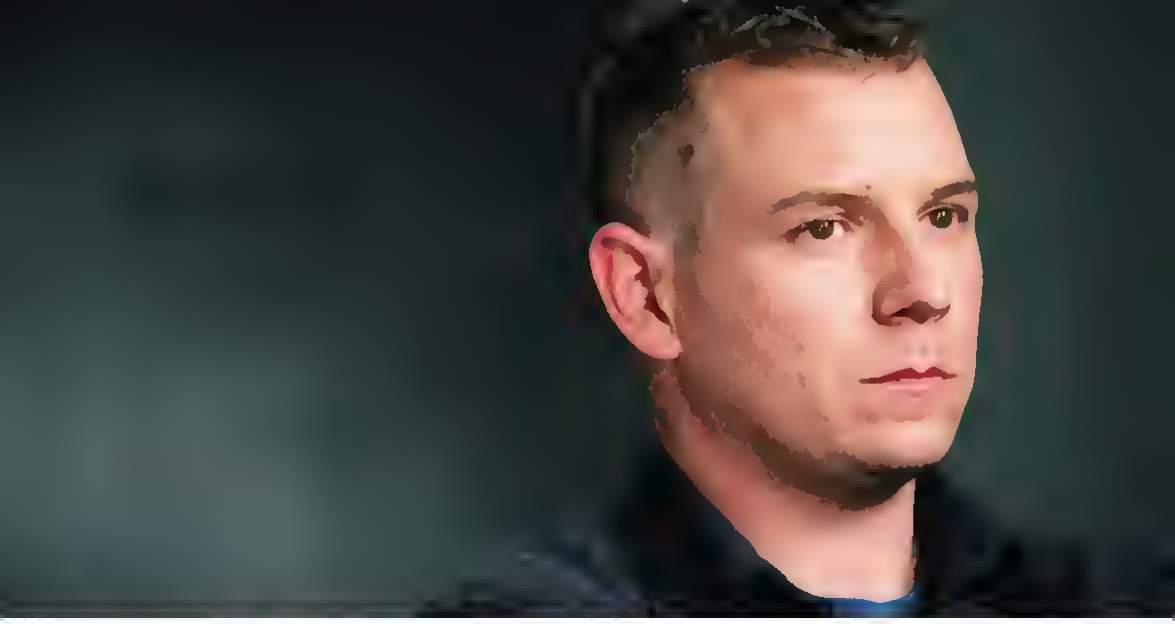
That this message comes from two inanimate objects who exchange no more than two words is, quite literally, awe-inspiring And awesome, in the truest sense, is the only word for the realism on screen it will burn your eyes, blow your mind and leave your heartstrings at the mercy of Stanton's tentative touch

It's a no-brainer to expect a Life Lesson from Pixar This one, however, cuts like a mortal wound do something *now*, before it's too late In eloquent blasts of emotive silence, the message is loud and clear Let's hope that people hear it. Andrea Kurland

Anticipation. Pixar have gone off the boil recently Could this be a return to the magical from the mundane? Three

Enjoyment So few words, so much said Four

In Retrospect Wake up kids! Only you can save us now! Four



STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

DIRECTED BY Errol Morris
STARRING Christopher Bradley, Sarah Deming, Javal Davis

Oh, how the mighty

have fallen. Errol Morris, the grandee of documentary making and the poster boy for wannabe video journalists everywhere, has directed a dud.

Standard Operating Procedure is a big money co-production between Sony and Participant Productions. Easily the best-looking documentary of the year, this intellectually compromised examination of the 2003 Abu Ghraib torture scandal is told via an arsenal of impressive cinematic standards – choppers overhead explode in full frame slow-mo, metallic casings ping noisily against the floor, while rabid police dogs snap at the camera with horror movie precision. And all the while a thumping score from Hollywood maestro Danny Elfman pumps away in the background, and interview subjects natter directly to us, to camera, using Morris' famed 'Interrotron' technique – a slightly gimmicky adaptation of the teleprompter that projects Morris' face in front of the camera, thus allowing subjects to address the lens with unselfconscious ease.

And yet for all this, the doc struggles. It doesn't really know what to say. We get, of course, the usual suspects – the puckish scapegoat Private Lynndie England (the 'leash' woman in the infamous torture pics), and the humiliated Brigadier General Janis Karpinski (who popped up in Rory Kennedy's far more focused doc *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*). There are new faces too – amiable sergeant Javal Davis is a blast, a keen mimic, and one of the few soldiers involved who seems uninterested in exculpating himself on camera. While steely-eyed 'freelance interrogator' Tim Dugan is genuinely terrifying and comes complete with a catchphrase, hissed through gritted teeth, "Do I look like I'm in the fuckin' army to you?!"

But, typically, we get nothing from the Iraqi side. We get little politics. We get little polemic. Instead, we get suggestions, thematic hints, here and there, at the bigger picture. Abu Ghraib had bad vibes. "I'm not sure about ghosts, but it's a freaky place," says Javal. Or Abu Ghraib's soldiers were out of their depths. "We got promoted from babysitters to torturers," again, from Javal. Mostly, however, Morris is happy to skip over the central thorny issues – the legitimisation of torture within the regime, and the overt sexualisation of this same torture – to opt instead for artsy analysis of the nature of truth and photographic images. "You don't see what's happening outside the frame!" moans military specialist Megan Graner, much to Morris' approval (you suspect). For a cinephile like Morris, this focus on modes of representation is perhaps natural enough, but in an urgent movie about human degradation it seems like the worst kind of apolitical wank-off imaginable. **Kevin Maher**

Anticipation: **Morris tackles Abu Ghraib? At last, the real story! Five**

Enjoyment: **Dics chopper shots. And great music! Three**

In Retrospect: **What was that? We know even less about Abu Ghraib now. One**

THE VISITOR

DIRECTED BY Tom McCarthy
STARRING Richard Jenkins, [illegible]

Picking up where

the compassionate humanism of *The Station Agent* left off, Thomas McCarthy s second film is the antidote to America's poisonous winter of discontent.

He may never overtly address the great global misadventures that have been ever present in cinemas over the last few months but they are there, unmistakeable beneath the surface. *The Visitor* is rooted in apprehension – the sense that change has come and a new America is awakening. Where the moral compass of this society will turn, however, hangs precariously in the balance.

Richard Jenkins plays Walter Vale, a university lecturer in stasis since the death of his wife. It's one of the great physical performances – still and quiet but ethereally present. Jenkins has the beaten spirit of a man with weights hanging from the corners of his mouth, dragging his expression into a perpetual despair matched by the blank surrender in his eyes.

But Walter's life is changed when he returns to the city from his upstate New York college to find that his apartment has been surreptitiously sub-let to a couple, Tarek (Haaz Sleiman) and Zainab (Danai Gurira), both of whom are illegal aliens.

After asking them to leave, Walter has a change of heart, driven partly by compassion but also by the fact that these exotic strangers offer him a companionship that is otherwise missing in his life, and a companionship on ideal terms: distant, independent but somehow connected.

And as Tarek introduces Walter to drumming sessions in Central Park he begins to understand what it means to face up to a new life, only for a cruel twist of fate to send the film spiralling in a new direction. What begins as a beguiling story of unlikely friendship ends in the brutalist block structure of a detention facility and a tender, heartbreaking romance between Walter and Tarek's mother, Mouna (Hiam Abbass).

After *The Station Agent*, *The Visitor* offers further proof that McCarthy could become the gentle genius of American cinema. The two films share many of the same concerns – the damaged, disaffected loner drawn out of his shell by the simple fact of love, and indeed *The Visitor* shares some of the same smart visual juxtapositions of its predecessor in its framing and scale.

But *The Visitor* has altogether more on its mind. Roger, an economics professor, is forced to look up from his world of white papers to acknowledge a simple truth: when you forget that life is about people, not the flow of wealth or market forces or emerging economies, you shut the door on your own humanity.

If there's a criticism to be levelled it's that Walter is nothing more than a tourist in Tarek, Zainab and Mouna's world. What is life and death for them is a dinner party conversation for him, maybe a book if he's lucky. And his infatuation with Mouna has an air of infantilism about it – she makes him feel strong, cultured and knowledgeable in the face of her powerlessness.

But you'd have to be an awful cynic to believe that in the face of two devastating performances and McCarthy's subtle, searching direction. His film may be called *The Visitor*, but he at least is here to stay. **Matt Bochenski**

Anticipation. ***The Station Agent* was a bold announcement of a new talent.** **Four**

Enjoyment. **Totally engaging if not beyond criticism.** **Four**

In Retrospect. **Put your cynicism aside and you're left with the rarest of films – one with head, heart and soul.** **Four**

See page 88 for an interview with director Tom McCarthy





THE WACKNESS

DIRECTED BY Jonathan Levine
STARRING Ben Kingsley, Famke Janssen, Josh Peck

Y'all remember when

Giuliani became mayor of New York and started getting all zero tolerance on yo' ass? Dawg that shit was wack. But, you know there was dopeness too. Fo' real that long hot summer of '94 was mad-crazy. Oh wait, no. You were listening to *Parklife*, wondering whether it was worth staying up to watch the World Cup in America and marvelling at the fact that shops were finally allowed to open on a Sunday.

Jonathan Levine's latest, however, is absolutely dripping in '90s New York nostalgia and hipster-hop. It's all there: the kicks, the tunes (Nas, Biggie, Wu-Tang and the rest, which, incidentally, makes for a great soundtrack), the politics, the slang. At its heart, though, this is a coming-of-age movie, which follows the story of a drug-dealing high-school outsider, Luke Shapiro (Josh Peck), in his summer search for happiness. And sex.

Josh Peck (formerly the fat one from Nickelodeon's *Drake & Josh*) excels as the unhappy Shapiro, while Ben Kingsley has great fun as the teenager's over-the-top therapist, Dr Squires, a weed-loving hippie-turned-psychologist who seems more messed up than his clients. It's the doctor's stepdaughter who Shapiro lusts after and befriends, yet it is the relationship that develops between the two maladjusted males that comes to define the 'growing up is hard to do' message.

There are some wonderful moments and a number of observations are spot on: awkward, rubbish teenage sex and the naivety/delusion of first love, for example, are both perfectly nailed. The problem lies in the occasions when Levine tries a little too hard, where what is pitched as creative or quirky doesn't quite hit the target. And despite the flashes of brilliance, much of the ground covered feels overly familiar; ultimately, too long is spent wading through mediocre ideas to get to the good stuff.

Maybe a nostalgic New Yorker won't agree, but there's too much contrived '90s-ness' going on, too many throwaway references to Giuliani, and too much awkward-sounding dialogue. "I see the dopeness in everything, you just see the wackness." It the highs suggest Levine has the potential to deliver, then the lows point to a director still honing his craft. *The Wackness* is like an ill-judged mix tape from an over-enthusiastic friend. A lot of love, thought and effort may have gone into putting it all together, but, in the end, only a couple of the tracks really get you going. Word. Adrian Sandiford

Anticipation. New York. The '90s. Drugs. Sex. A crowd pleaser at Sundance. Could be good. Three

Enjoyment. Hmm, not much new here. Hang on, that's great! That's dope. Oh no, don't do that. That's wack. Wait, why are we talking like this? Three

In Retrospect. Giuliani's zero tolerance approach would have benefited the edit, aight. Two

An interview with Jonathan Levine, director of *The Wackness*.

LWLies: *The Wackness* revolves around a confused teeneger during the summer of 1994, which, coincidentally, ie elso the yeer you finiehed high school. How much ot your own life ie in that character?

Levine: A lot of me is in there – from his perspective on life to the world he grows up in. None of the specific things that happen to this kid happened to me, but a lot of how he looks at the world is very much something that comes from my soul. Beyond that, the music he listens to, the way he feels in high school, the way he feels towards the adults in his life, a lot of things are based on feelings that I had at the time.

LWLies: At its heart this ie e coming-ot-age etory, but it's elso dominated by New York end hip-hop culture in the '90s. Do you think thet'll trenslate to people who heve no connection with the setting?

Levine: It was always our goal to be very specific yet, emotionally, to have these characters go through feelings that would transcend any sort of specificity. We wanted it to be as accessible as possible. It's a testament to the cast that I think people are getting it across different backgrounds, geography, whatever. Hopefully people who don't get all the references can still get the feelings that the characters are going through, because it's for anyone who's ever had their heart broken or needed an adult figure in their life when all the adults seemed to be assholes.

LWLies: For Josh Psck it's quite e departure trom his time on *Drake & Josh*. Did you choose him because of, or despite, hie hietory?

Levine: I had never really seen *Drake & Josh*. It's remarkable because it's a very different style of acting. That show is very broad and big, and from that you would never think that he'd be able to do this, because it's a much more subtle thing. It worked out nicely that I had never seen the show because I didn't have any preconceived notions about him. He just came in and gave the best audition.

LWLies: *The Wackness* ie very different to your elasher movie, *All The Boys Love Mandy* Lene. Do you think the order in which people eppreach your work metters?

Levine: It's hard for me to think about because there's not much I can do about it. There are consistencies between the two of them, but I think they may also appeal to very different types of filmgoers, and that's nice too. I don't necessarily think the order matters. I guess it just depends on the person, but I don't mind, I'm very proud of them both. I think the next thing is a vacation. I don't know if I deserve it, but I feel like I need it. **Adrian Sandiford**

See more ot this dope shit at www.littlewhitelies.co.uk.



A director who calls

himself by a single name normally sets alarm bells ringing – McG, anyone? – and Tarsem's prior body ot work doesn't exactly silence them. His only film, 2000's *The Cell*, was a messy serial-killer movie with Jennifer Lopez, marked by extraordinary fantasy scenes, but crippled by pretensions. Luckily, he has managed to marry his unique eye with a serviceable story, and the result is a surprising delight.

The Fall begins in 1920s Los Angeles. Alexandria (newcomer Catinca Untaru), a 10-year-old recovering from a broken arm, befriends Roy Walker (Lee Pace, from TV's *Pushing Daisies*), a youthful crippled man who begins to tell her a story of four adventurers exiled by an evil count. As the film goes on, both their lives become intertwined in Walker's increasingly desperate fiction.

Plot-wise, *The Fall* is superficially similar to *The Princess Bride*, with its post-modern structure and childlike tales ot derring-do. However, a far more apt antecedent is Terry Gilliam's infamous flop, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*. Like that film, this boasts wild flights of fantasy reality blending with fiction, a cast of characters with unusual skills and stories, and a director willing to splash his unique artistic vision all over the screen.

The Fall has been a labour of love for Tarsem, who reportedly filmed it in 18 different countries. As in *The Cell*, he fills the film with Oriental and Asian-influenced costumes and designs, but in the service ot the film rather than an optional add-on to it. The result is a riot of colour and action, a joyful marriage ot the director's visionary style and the extraordinary art direction. The fantasy sequences are beautiful, using the world's stage as a backdrop and rarely resorting to cheap visual effects.

Where the film doesn't succeed so well is in its narrative, which becomes overburdened with Walker's backstory and too often takes itself too seriously. There are precious few jokes, and the film's final reel takes it from kid's film material to something more grown up altogether. But who cares when a film looks as gorgeous as this? Unfortunately, its quirky originality will no doubt see *The Fall* suffer a similar commercial fate to *Munchausen*. It will be a shame, because you won't see a more creative film this year. **Dan Stewart**

Anticipation: **A fantasy children's movie from the director of *The Cell*. Pretentious much? One.**

Enjoyment: **Endlessly original and wonderfully shot. A banquet for the eyes. Four.**

In Retrospect: **It's not as clever as it would like to be, but is a thrilling, beautiful film nonetheless. Four.**



"It's not exactly a child-friendly place, is it?" You don't always expect words of truth from an estate agent but it'd be hard to put a spin on the house at the centre of the latest film from the director of *Performance*, *Don't Look Now* and *Bad Timing*. And by the end of Nic Roeg's *Puffball*, you've seen this site of a young child's death turn into a new nightmare for the female architect determined to remodel it.

Of course we all know that ambitious young city folk who move to the countryside deserve everything they get from spooky backward locals. In Dan Weldon's adaptation of mum Fay's 1980 novel, housewife Liffey (Kelly Reilly) has been given a career, while the emphasis is very much on Liffey's mystical neighbours sullen, wide-eyed Audrey (Leona Igoe), her mad mother Mebs (Miranda Richardson) and utterly bonkers, ancient matriarch Molly (Rita Tushingham).

There's a lot going on here for a small movie. pagan gods, witchcraft and some frankly startling internal shots (well, once you've directed one of the best sex scenes in cinema, in *Don't Look Now*, where do you go from there?). Donald Sutherland puts in an unnecessary turn as Liffey's former boss, while her globetrotting boyfriend would have found stronger characterisation in a mobile phone ad. Indeed Roeg barely seems bothered about pulling the whole together. But as the estate agent goes on to say "I love how it fits together but sort of doesn't." **Jonas Milk**

Anticipation: **Eh, seriously? Nic Roeg does Fay Weldon? One**

Enjoyment: **Mad, bad and dangerous to boot. Three**

In Retrospect: **Neither cult nor kitsch. Two**

Don't look now, but *LWLies* has talked to the director of *Puffball*, Nic Roeg.

LWLies: What drew you to Fay Weldon's book?
Roeg: I like Fay Weldon, she's a fine writer, there's a lot of truth in her. I read the script [adapted by her son, Dan] and I asked to read the book. This is so strange, a son writing from his mother's work. You can tell secrets when you're writing, how odd to be delving into your mother's thoughts. We met but the script had been out to other people – two or three people who'd turned it down. So I said, 'I've come as the last resort, have I?'

LWLies: Were there any specific themes that resonated?
Roeg: Well, inevitably, if you are drawn to something, and I was certainly drawn to it, you spot truths that apply to yourself as well. Even as it was being made I realised that we were scratching other surfaces as well. It has divisions in it. It doesn't follow a genre of any kind. It's not a thriller but it has a happy ending, though not the one you necessarily think it's going to have, like our lives. The only thing I would beg the audience to do is not to have an instant opinion as they come out because the truth of the film isn't as obvious as you think it might be. Nowadays we get very swiftly into opinion – we want instant opinion. I'm not nervous about it because I know it will live.

LWLies: Did you enjoy casting the women's roles?
Roeg: It really cast itself. I saw Kelly Reilly at my home. She arrived and sat down and said, 'I want to do this.' I said, 'And I want you to do it.' 'Good. Thank you very much.' It was the most fantastic piece of casting. They're all extraordinary. It's about the women but it's really about life. It's not a feminist movie, it's not a male movie, it's about people but it happens to be that gender. One thing that stands out to me – there would have been dozens of different ways of playing Rita Tushingham's part of a woman at 70 in grief. I've heard a couple of people say, 'I think she was a bit overdramatic.' Grief is so mysterious, it's beyond sorrow or sadness, it's a loss of reason, a form of madness.

LWLies: Did you film on HD?
Roeg: Bits and pieces. Filming has become a different thing, it moves on. Eventually it will be known as something else, the retained image will be the same, the captured image, but your grandchildren will probably ask, 'Why was it called film?' 'Well, there was this piece of celluloid with light-sensitive film painted on top.' They'll say, 'Oh yes, very interesting, we've got to go out now.' **Jonas Milk**

See the full transcript of this interview at www.littlewhitelies.co.uk.

The KING of KONG
A FISTFUL of QUARTERS

★★★★★
"Kicks Indy and Iron Butt"

"10 out of 10... You'd be a donkey to miss it."

"THE movie to see this year"

★★★★★
"Bleepin' brilliant"

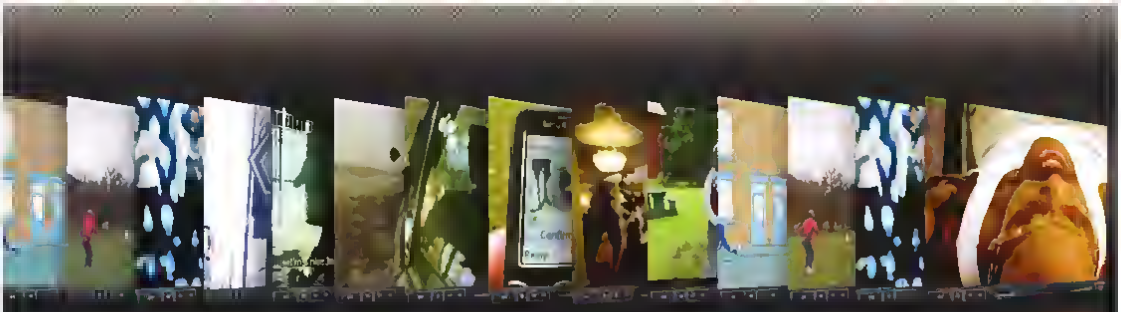




OUT NOW ON DVD

www.thekingofkong.co.uk

over 100 stores · free delivery online **zavvi**.co.uk



Connect to over
37,000 members in the UK and US

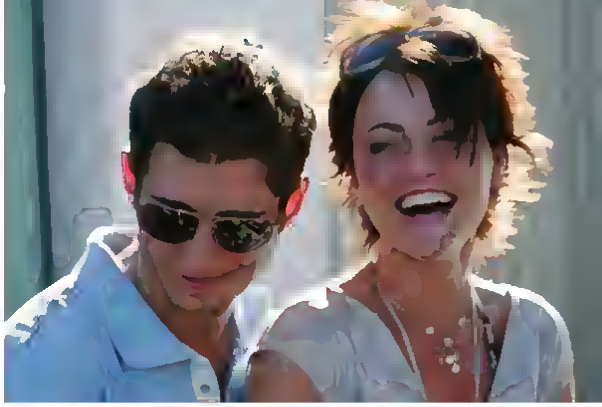
Find collaborators, cast and crew your film using Shooting People. Upload your films to your profile to exhibit your work to other members, the industry and beyond.

Try us for free: ***shootingpeople.org/letmetry***

Shooting People

The international networking organisation dedicated to the support and promotion of independent filmmaking

DONKEY PUNCH



Taking part in a sex

act that has achieved the status of urban legend is all fun and games until someone gets killed. At which point the mates with whom you've been crewing a luxury yacht and the girls you just picked up at a club will try to kill you in order to avoid being held responsible. That's the important message at the heart of low budget British slasher *Donkey Punch*, and it's one that cannot be overstated in today's promiscuous society.

Not really. First-time director Olly Blackburn makes only the shallowest of attempts to tap into any fears his audience might have about hooking up with complete strangers on holiday, before getting down to a pornographic depiction of the titular incident that sets the tone for the rest of this nautical nasty.

At first, the characters seem more naturalistic than your average horror fare, but on a moment's reflection you realise that's only because the largely unknown cast are British, and us Brits have become ingrained to watching Americans in this type of film. If anything though, *Donkey Punch*'s parochial focus is remarkably egalitarian, proving that when it comes to horror, we can behave just as stupidly as our American cousins.

There's a couple of well-staged kills – including an outboard motor wielded like a chainsaw – but by and large the characters make stupid decisions and therefore die stupid, gratuitous deaths. Coupled with the atrocious dialogue, their idiocy leaves the film devoid of a real sense of threat, so while Blackburn makes quite good use of the limited space and weaponry available on a boat, he never approaches anything like a claustrophobic atmosphere.

On this particular outing there's nothing new under the sun. But at least there are no seamen/semen jokes. **Alexander Pashby**

Anticipation. **Uncharted water, perhaps. Three**

Enjoyment. **Nope, just bilge water. Two**

In Retrospect. **Nothing to salvage here. One**

MAD DETECTIVE



"The gun plays a

significant part," says Bun (Lau Ching Wan), the former police detective called in by regional investigating officer Ho (Andy On) to help determine what has happened to officer Wong and to his service revolver, both missing in action for the last 18 months – even if the gun itself has apparently been reused in several murderous robberies since.

In a sense, Johnny To's latest, *Mad Detective*, co-directed by Wai Ka-Fai, tells a similar story to his 2003 film *PTU* – an increasingly dark and desperate search for a policeman's missing gun, exposing all manner of questionable ethics along the way. It fast becomes clear, however, that *Mad Detective* is a *policier* like no other, with a protagonist whose methods stretch the limits of unorthodoxy far beyond generic cliché.

Forced into early retirement after going all van Gogh on his own ear, Bun is quite probably mad, but he also has an impressive crime-solving record, thanks to being blessed – or cursed – with an ability to see people's 'inner personalities'. And when Bun looks at Wong's partner Chi-Wai (Lam Ka Tung), what he sees is seven different people all vying to keep a secret buried. If the whodunnit bit comes easy for Bun, keeping his wife May (Kelly Lin) happy, and the sceptical Ho on an even keel, will prove far more difficult.

Cleverly scripted, brilliantly acted and masterfully edited, *Mad Detective* explores the very human capacity of losing one's moral centre in a crisis. A schizophrenic mix of uneasy humour, aching drama and rug-pulling twists, the film races along so fast you will be left struggling to catch up later.

"This investigation is driving everyone crazy," suggests Chi Wai. Viewers will agree – but it is delirium of the most satisfyingly original kind. **Anton Bitel**

Anticipation. **Johnny To has a strong record of delivering the genre goods. Three**

Enjoyment. **But rarely with such a satisfyingly complex set of brain-bending twists. Four**

In Retrospect. **You'd be mad to miss it (and you may even want to see it more than once). Four**



SOMERS TOWN

DIRECTED BY
Shane Meadows
STARRING Thomas Turgoose, Piotr Jaglello

Contrary to what

you might expect from its evocative monicker *Somers Town* is not set in some rural idyll in the Lake District. Instead, Shane Meadows' latest takes place against a backdrop of tower blocks and construction projects in the triangle of housing estates between Euston, King's Cross and St Pancras stations. Having spent the last of his worldly wealth on a train down from Nottingham, it is here that teen runaway Tomo (Thomas Turgoose) finds himself skint and homeless, with nothing in his life but the clothes on his back and a winning sense of humour. That is, until he bumps into Marek (Piotr Jaglello), an aspiring young Polish photographer whose father has moved to England to work on the construction of the new Eurostar terminal.

Shot in earthy monochrome by Natasha Braier (*XXY*), what follows is a gentle but finely observed coming-of-age story, as Tomo and Marek do what boys growing up do. They squabble. They drink in the park. They wank (well, Tomo does). Most of all, they bond over a shared admiration for local French waitress Maria (Elisa Lasowski), competing for her affection with a charming combination of unshakeable optimism and adolescent ineptitude.

As you'd expect from Meadows, it's acutely well-observed, leavened by flashes of dry humour and human warmth. Paul Fraser's script is likewise inquisitive, intelligent and well-crafted, giving full reign to Turgoose's prodigious talent for improvisation (as well as his capacity to keep a straight face while wearing women's clothes).

Although the film works well on a micro level, it ultimately offers little in the way of a bigger picture. Some razor-sharp dialogue and a winning cameo from Perry Benson can't mask the fact that *Somers Town* isn't really *about* very much. The film's shooting script was only 35 pages long, and its central premise feels like it has been stretched to fit a larger canvas than was originally intended. While the baggy structure leaves space for Meadows to draw out a cast of nuanced and believable characters, their improvisation produces as many moments of mediocrity as of mercurial brilliance. At times, the young leads' dialogue feels stilted and slow to ignite, with little in the way of dramatic conflict to raise the emotional stakes. Indeed, Tomo and Marek's relationship is heartwarming but ultimately shallow, fuelled by circumstance and mutual emotional poverty rather than a deeper human connection.

With little at stake for its leading characters, the film's dramatic drive soon goes missing, and it peters out into a series of amusing and artfully managed set pieces. Instead of capitalising on what has gone before, some individual scenes feel like brilliantly workshopped but insular scenarios, rather than the building blocks of a grander – and more emotionally satisfying – dramatic experience. **Mike Brett**

Anticipation. **Meadows and Turgoose reunite? We're heading for Platform One, Entertainment Central. Four**

Enjoyment. **Moments of beauty but, like the West Coast mainline on a bank holiday weekend, the narrative isn't really going anywhere. Three**

In Retrospect. **Flawed but fascinating. Buy a return ticket and bask in a second viewing. Three**



SAVAGE GRACE

DIRECTED BY Tom Kalin
STARRING Julianne Moore, Eddie Redmayne, Stephen Dillane

Gay cinema in the

US suffers from something of an identity crisis, a symptom, no doubt, of the fact that Hollywood still hasn't really come out of the closet. The big studios still tend to portray gays as loveable, non-sexual sidekicks, and the number of directors working specifically in the genre can be counted on one hand. Thank goodness, then, for the return of Tom Kalin, who came to prominence in 1992 with gay cinema classic, *Swoon*. After years as a producer, Kalin has returned to the director's chair. What a shame the film isn't better.

Set across the 1950s and '60s, *Savage Grace* tells the true story of vacuous socialite Barbara Baekeland (Julianne Moore) the increasingly unmaternal affection she gives her spoiled son Tony (Eddie Redmayne), and the dark chain of events it sets off. Kalin's intention seems to be to make a camp tragedy – an Oedipal take on *The Talented Mr Ripley* as directed by Douglas Sirk – but the finished product is too rambling and hysterical to be a success.

The film spends too long documenting the pair's triangular relationship with a family friend (played with a Dirk Bogarde-esque queenliness by Hugh Dancy), and not enough exploring Tony and Barbara's fragile mental state. In particular, Tony's insanity is played almost as an afterthought and relayed via that old screenwriting cheat: extracts from a journal read out as voice-over. The film isn't helped by Redmayne's simpering performance, making Tony appear afflicted more by teenage angst than mental despair. Moore copes bravely with a remarkably undignified part, but isn't up to her usual high standard.

It's not a comfortable watch – Kalin's camera has an almost erotic fixation with its characters' faces, and the variety of extreme close-ups of wetted lips and freckled skin can turn the stomach. This is true too of Tony and Barbara's final, incestuous scene together, an excruciatingly misjudged piece of melodrama that could seal the film's fate as a cult classic, but little else. **Dan Stewart**

Anticipation **One of Hollywood's most talented actresses in a dark, psychological drama. Could be a wincer. Four**

Enjoyment **Ponderous. It meanders its way to that final, hilariously overblown scene. Two**

In Retrospect **If you want camp, the 1950s and Julianne Moore, go and rent *Days of Heaven* instead. Two**

LWLies puts Tom Kalin in the doctor's chair.

LWLies: This is your first film for more than 15 years. Why the break?
Kalin: Well, I concentrated on my career as a producer for *I Shot Andy Warhol* and *Go Fish*. I made some short films. I tried to get some projects off the ground. I spent a lot of time on a picture about Robert Mapplethorpe and Patti Smith but in the end it never worked. Patti wasn't keen on it.

LWLies: The critical reception has been mixed. Were you surprised by that?
Kalin: *Savage Grace* has divided a lot of people. It's a movie that we intended sincerely, I have a lot of compassion towards these characters. I don't think the actors asked of the audience – and I didn't ask that of the audience – to get into the movie in a typical way. For sure, it's an uncomfortable film.

LWLies: Are we supposed to feel sorry for Barbara and Tony?
Kalin: I don't think that was my intention, no. The brilliance of the actors in this is that they generate enough power to not judge the characters. These are brittle people, but their emotions are genuine.

LWLies: The real-life reasons for the denouement between Barbara and Tony aren't really explored in the film. Why did you decide to approach it that way?
Kalin: I think the movie goes out of the way to make that ambivalent. The way Barbara reacts to Hugh Dancy's character, when he kisses and fondles Tony, that smile she gives him... This does not show someone who has simple issues with homosexuality. It's more complicated that that. It's not correcting his homosexuality by insisting they have sex – it's more consuming. I think that she wants to own him.

LWLies: The film's final scene is very difficult to watch. Do you think it was successful?
Kalin: Shooting that for me was as uncomfortable as it is for the audience, and I hope that some of my own discomfort translated into what you see on screen. Barbara's masturbation of Tony has dramatic meaning. She asks, 'Did you come?' and he says, 'No'. It's the only small way he can resist her now. She's taken over his whole life. It's a terrible form of control.

LWLies: What were your influences?
Kalin: Oh, a whole bunch of things. Greek tragedy, obviously. There's something poetic about that. In terms of filmmakers: Buñuel and Visconti and Fellini, and Bresson as well. The characters are Bressonian. They're rich, immoral people. I was also inspired by Hitchcock, creating tension from what you don't see. Apart from the sex scene and the murder, a lot of the action occurs off-screen. **Dan Stewart**

Visit the psychiatrist's office at www.littlewhitelies.co.uk



EL BAÑO DEL PAPA

Inspired by the 1998 visit of Pope John Paul II to the rather unremarkable and impoverished Uruguayan town of Melo on the Brazilian border, this distinguished collaborative effort from Oscar-nominated cinematographer César Charlone (*City of God*) and screenwriter Enrique Fernández is an engaging and affecting drama of human aspiration.

As news spreads of the impending Papal visit, numbers begin circulating: hundreds of people will come, thousands, claim the media. There is even talk of 50,000. The desperately poor townspeople know what this means: 50,000 pilgrims in need of food and drink; paper flags, souvenirs and commemorative medals. Brimming with enthusiasm, the villagers not only hope for divine blessing but above all for a small share of material happiness. And petty smuggler Beto (César Troncoso) is certain that he's found the best business idea of all: '*El Baño del Papa*' – 'The Pope's Toilet' – where the thousands of pilgrims can find relief. Let others make mountains of chorizo sausages and bake towers of cakes – he will strike it rich with something far less savoury.

But before he can build the WC, Beto rushes headlong into trouble. He sorely tries the patience of his stoical but optimistic wife Carmen (Virginia Méndez) and disappoints his adolescent daughter Silvia (Virginia Ruiz), who dreams of a career in the media. He has to increase his risky and arduous trips across the border, and he has to bury his long-cherished dream of buying a moped. He even loses his most precious possession – his bicycle – just as he secures the keystone for his temple to waste and wealth: the toilet bowl. But he is determined to make it back in time for the divine event.

An elegantly crafted yet determinedly realist tale of the chaos that ensues when a celebrity comes to town, Fernández and Charlone set Beto's tale and the rapid disappearance of his family's meagre savings against the broader canvas of the wonderfully disparate community's colourful adventures. In this regard, and in its understated performances and gentle comedy, *El Baño del Papa* certainly shares similarities with Juan Pablo Rebella and Pablo Stoll's 2004 film, *Whisky*. However, the film's real strength of depth comes from its deft depiction of dignity and solidarity in the face of genuine social and economic adversity. The focus on Beto's race against time to construct the WC, compounded by César Troncoso's compassionate and beautifully pitched performance as the luckless peasant destined to experience nothing other than the most rotten of bad luck, calls to mind Vittorio De Sica's magnificent *Bicycle Thieves*.

Compromised by the cruel whims of the wider world, Beto conspires to lose his bicycle and with that moment his chance of a handsome payday slowly drains through his earth-sodden fingers. This is a film of quiet desperation, but one also that retains a sense of hope and a genuine and natural affinity for its characters, its landscape and its country. Jason Wood

Anticipation. The title could be better. Two

Enjoyment. Touching, humorous and poignant. Superb central performance too. Four

In Retrospect. Another milestone in recent Uruguayan cinema. Four



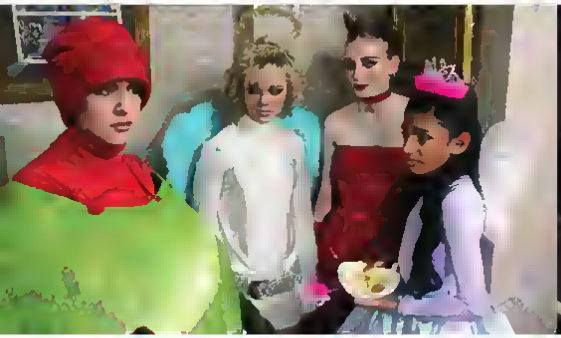


THE APARTMENT

A LETTER TO TRUE

Billy Wilder's 1960 classic, *The Apartment*, has at its core a brilliant comic turn from Jack Lemmon as CC Baxter, a man whose home is exploited by his ruthless bosses. There is also a touching romance between Baxter and Miss Kubelik (Shirley MacLaine), the beautiful lift attendant he loves from afar. But don't confuse *The Apartment*, re-released in a restored print by the BFI, for some sunny rom-com. Billy Wilder was the king of the comic tragedy, and here is his masterpiece, a bittersweet tale of alienation, sadness and attempted suicide, but also one of hope, forgiveness and the redemptive power of love. Superbly photographed, wonderfully performed, and with a message of real resonance. **Matt Bochenski**

When a director dedicates their film to their dog, misgivings are only to be expected. But when it's Bruce Weber indulging in some puppy love, it's a different story – literally – as we see in this re-release of his 2004 film, *A Letter To True*. Instead of a sentimental journey through the life of the very photogenic True, Weber's dog is used as a talisman in a film that scrapbooks everything, from the Vietnam War to 9/11, which left its mark on a pup who now "looks up when every plane goes by". Mananne Faithfull, Dirk Bogarde and Julie Christie's narration only adds further atmosphere to this portrait of a flawed but much-loved America. At the very least, this is no ordinary home movie. **Lauren Cochrane**





ANGUS, THONGS AND PERFECT SNOGGING

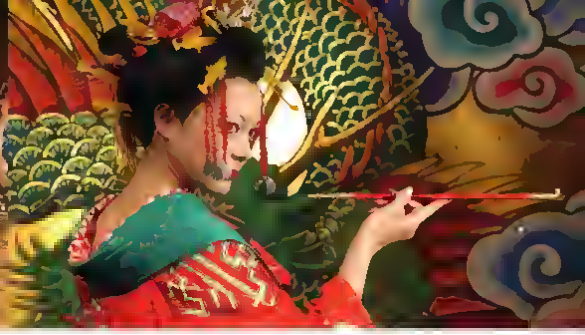
BEN X

The latest from the bright, breezy and perennially banal Gurinder Chadha follows the budding love life of 15-year-old Georgia Nicholson. It should be rubbish, saddled with a script that drops embarrassing sub-*Juno* bricks along the lines of 'marvy' and 'nervy b' (don't ask), and the kind of optimism that makes you want to drown a kitten. And yet it's really charming, thanks to a brilliant lead performance from ex-*London to Brighton* star Georgia Groome. By the end, even the script has found its feet, with the odd cute observation ("I'm a woman now – I wear a bra!") and a touching sense of a young girl who finds that maturity isn't all it's cracked up to be. **Matt Bochenski**

See page 89 for an interview with Georgia Groome.

Ben (Greg Timmermans) lives in a small, unnamed Belgian town, coddled by his mother and relentlessly bullied at school because of his Asperger's syndrome. His only escape from the misery of day-to-day life is *Archlord*, an online role-playing game in which he meets a shapely lady avatar called Scarlite (Laura Verlinden). Director Nic Balthazar seems intent on integrating game and film as fully as possible, with the opening credits presented as in-game options, and nice touches like having Ben wear a heart rate monitor so he can keep track of his 'health' levels. But a series of implausible twists leaves a film that begins as entertaining magic realism finally becoming irritating, morally superior nonsense. **Steve Watson**





BUDDHA COLLAPSED OUT OF SHAME

STARRING Abbas Alizadeh

SAKURAN

STARRING Anne Suzuki,

From Hana Makhmalbaf comes this Neorealist

fable showing the current Afghani climate through a child's eyes. All the adorably obstinate Baktay (Nikbakht Noruz) wants is to go to school. But to go to school she'll need a notebook. To buy a notebook she'll need some money. To make some money she'll need some eggs. And so begins her colourful struggle, as Makhmalbaf traverses the boundary between political allegory (one of the most disturbing scenes sees the children 'playing war'; putting a bag over Baktay's head and threatening to stone her) and warm, comic drama. This is a brave and engaging offering spoilt only by the crass, heavy-handed documentary footage that follows Baktay's poignant final scene. **Kat Halstead**

Based on Moyoco Anno's relatively obscure

manga *Sakuran* is the tale of Kiyoha, a Japanese prostitute who dreams and schemes of escape from her gilded cage, while rising through the ranks of a high-class brothel. Playing like an authentic riposte to Rob Marshall's *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *Sakuran* isn't afraid to examine the dirt under its fingernails. That said, it's predictably ravishing, full of gorgeous colours and the striking metaphor of a fish hanging as if suspended in mid air. Though occasionally leaden-footed and melodramatic (both signs of director Mika Ninagawa's inexperience) this is a film of clarity, conviction and a satisfyingly earthy approach to sex. **Danny Bangs**





THE ROCKER

STARRING Rainn Wilson,

LOU REED'S BERLIN

Oh dear. This poor man's Judd Apatow wannabe

comedy directed by Peter Cattaneo (*The Full Monty*) is a dire waste of time. Robert 'Fish' Fishman (Rainn Wilson) is a depressed forty-something whiling away his days reminiscing about his brief stint 20 years ago as the drummer in super group, Vesuvius, until he was unceremoniously dumped. Life changes when his teenage nephew persuades him to play in his band and they inadvertently hit the big time. Cattaneo has populated his film with bit-part actors from Apatow's stable and all-too familiar comedy stereotypes, which does nothing to help a film that feels like it's on auto-pilot. This does not rock. **Penelope Valentine**

This is as raw as it gets. No conversation, no

soundbites, no background or history – just Lou Reed playing his 1973 concept album *Berlin*, in its entirety. But what could have been a beautiful and pure expression of musical creativity falls completely flat as Reed barely turns up to perform. The once charismatic and exciting leader of the Velvet Underground does a fantastic impression of a man completely disinterested in playing music, and although technically competent, the performance, filmed over five nights, is tedious despite the excellent source material. Schnabel experiments with different angles and effects but he can't escape the film's only offering – a man on stage looking bored. **Jonathan Williams**





KUNG FU PANDA

DIRECTED BY [illegible]
STARRING Jack Black, Angelina Jolie, [illegible]

DAYLIGHT ROBBERY

DIRECTED BY [illegible]
STARRING Vas Blackwood, [illegible]

Kung Fu Panda can proudly take its place as the best DreamWorks Animation movie by a country mile. Despite featuring a laundry list of vocal talent, the powers that be seem to have finally, *finally* sussed it: it really doesn't matter who's doing the voices if you don't have a script, a story and a character that feel like they really matter. That's what *Kung Fu Panda* gets right – investing animation nous with real heart. This story of an overweight panda who inadvertently becomes a kung fu champion of the people is warm, funny, tender and terrifically directed. It's still Rolt Hama to Pixar's Rembrandt, but even that is a step in the right direction for DreamWorks. **Matt Bochenski**

Set during the 2006 World Cup, _Daylight Robbery_ follows a group of football fans who use the tournament as a distraction to rob the London Exchange Bank. The heist movie is a British cinema staple, and with this in mind writer/director Paris Leonti hasn't stretched himself too far. He offers up the usual staples of tough leader, wimpy family man, token black dude and white boy who thinks he's black, all of whom are 'Lahndaners', just in case the dropped aitches weren't enough of a clue. Although the film has its moments (Shaun Williamson's *Magnum PI* 'tache) there isn't enough to get the blood pumping. With its crisp 90-minute running time, one wonders if *Daylight Robbery* wouldn't be more effective on TV. **Limara Salt**





ORIGIN: SPIRITS OF THE PAST

DIRECTED BY [illegible]
STARRING [illegible]

CHOP SUEY

DIRECTED BY [illegible]
STARRING Peter Johnson, [illegible]

A strange but effective mix of CGI and traditional animation sees 'The Forest', a genetically enhanced sentient form of plant life, swamping the planet, forcing its inhabitants to live a medieval lifestyle. When Tools, a young girl from the past, tries to restore the world to the way it was, she is brought into conflict with Agito, who wants to forge a more peaceful co-existence. There is genuine moral ambiguity here. Traditional bad guys are absent, replaced by different characters, each of which believes they are acting in the world's best interest. These shades of grey make for a more mature package, so while Studio Ghibli remains at the forefront of emotionally resonant anime, *Origins* proves that the pack is catching up. **Jonathan Williams**

Bruce Weber likes to mix things up. _Chop Suey_ testifies to this. Part-documentary, part photographic montage, it tells the stories of several contrasting characters dotting Weber's universe. See a portrait of lesbian cabaret actress and singer Frances Faye using interviews with friends and family, including her partner Ten Shepherd. Or a more intimate look at Peter Johnson, a model Weber discovered as a young wrestler. This being Weber, it isn't even as straight forward as a double narrative. The movie starts with an anecdote about losing a contact sheet in the desert, switches to black-and-white images of Johnson at a wrestling try out, and on to footage of London Bridge at night set to a soundtrack of opera. And so it carries on. **Lauren Cochrane**





THE FOX & THE CHILD

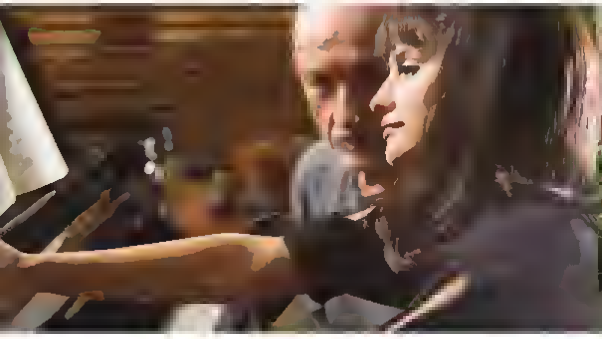
THE FORBIDDEN KINGDOM

After bagging critical praise for *March of the Penguins*, Luc Jacquet is tackling a more difficult genre: the kid's movie

The Fox & The Child is a fairytale in which an adventurous young girl befriends a fox in the nearby woods. Showcasing an interesting mix of nature documentary and fictional narrative, the opening is nonetheless baffling as the tone fluctuates between sweet fable and Discovery Channel dryness. Confusion is not a feeling you want to ignite in an audience hoping for something along the lines of an early Disney live action classic, but the odd mix makes this near silent film (excluding Kate Winslet's narration) every parent's dream: one that's both educational and entertaining. **Limara Salt**

As bizarre as it is that it's taken so long to get Jet Li and Jackie Chan together, it's even more bizarre that it's happened in a film like *The Forbidden Kingdom*

Bizarre especially for Li, who has made a career of looking very serious as he delivers the goods, but here takes to the light-hearted script with aplomb, proving himself an equal match for Chan's more experienced comedy chops. Michael Angarano is a kung fu obsessed teen sucked into the titular kingdom to save the Monkey King. But it's Li and Chan who, inevitably, provide the highlights with a series of more-or-less CGI-free fights. Aimed squarely at young boys who will delight in its simple *Karate Kid*-meets-*Crouching Tiger* vibe, *The Forbidden Kingdom* charms. **Jonathan Williams**





ELEGY

CASS

Sure, you'll get to see Penélope Cruz with her top off. But you can get that from *Don't Move*, *The Girl of your Dreams*, *Abre Los Ojos* and more. And some of those films – well, a couple – are actually quite good. Following the affair between an ageing professor and his smokin' young student, *Elegy* sees scripter Nicholas Meyer (who fluffed an adaptation of *The Human Stain*) again fail to winch Philip Roth's fiery prose onto the screen. All wispy white hair and stunted emotion, a painfully unsexy Ben Kingsley stokes zero chemistry with Cruz, who struggles to sizzle as an English-speaking object of desire. Spanish director Isabel Coixet's tale of lust, beauty and mortality is curiously unlikeable and uninteresting. **Jonathan Crocker**

The problem with *Cass* – the true story of Cass Pennant, the first person in the UK to be given a long-term prison sentence for football-related violence and who went on to become Britain's bestselling black author – is that the redemption part of the story just isn't as interesting as the hooliganism part. *Cass* is best viewed as a movie with historical interest, with director Jon S Baird inter-cutting the action judiciously with archive footage of violence and clips of Margaret Thatcher's press conferences addressing 'the English disease'. Similarly, Pennant's unique and ironic reason for turning to hooliganism as a way of escaping racial prejudice means he's ideally placed to comment on the motives of other hooligans. **Alexander Pashby**

CHAPTER FIVE

IN WHICH WE DISCUSS THE MEDIUM OF FILM IN ITS MANY MESMERISING FORMS


CIRQUE
DU PETIT
BLANC
FEATURING
UNDERGROUND
CINEMA
GAEL
GARCÍA
BERNAL
TMNT
LEE
SCRATCH
PERRY
JEWISH WESTERNS

VIVA LA REVOLUCIÓN





Gael García Bernal isn't perfect. It's a revelation that has been a long time coming. At 29-years-old, Bernal is an actor of proven depth and versatility. And while most screen stars spend their formative years proving their talent, Bernal has gone one step further and established himself as a humanitarian spokesperson on the side.

His personal life has also appeared charmed. Often recognised as one of the world's more beautiful people, he's resisted the temptation to make merry with the accolade. Indeed, his only high profile relationship to date has been with Harvard alum Natalie Portman – Hollywood's smartest sex symbol.

However, it's through his latest project that Bernal proves himself endearingly fallible. *Deficit* is a directorial debut in which he also stars – a rookie mistake. 'I don't want to act and direct again,' he says. 'I went crazy. I thought I was going to learn as a director by doing it, but I learned most as an actor, and as an actor I learned that I should never do that again."

Despite Bernal's protests, *Déficit* does demonstrate his learning curve as a first time director. The film explores the class and race issues of Mexican culture as seen through the eyes of ignorant twenty somethings. As the main protagonist, Cristobal, Bernal is a rich party boy whose life is an example of all that's unjust in his society.

It's by no means a masterwork, but it does show that Bernal's personal and professional agendas are inherently connected. "You always write about that little itch,' he explains. "It doesn't mean it has to be downward suffering, but I do want to keep on doing stories that have some political complexity to them. Living in Mexico, I'll never be able to avoid the political aspect of life because whatever I do is a political decision there."

Regardless of his motives, Bernal's foray into directing is a tricky move for an actor whose profile is on the rise. Referring to his new discipline as "a sport', he may appear dismissive of the craft, but Bernal is upfront about the trials of a first time director – there's no attempting to paper over the cracks. "There were really horrible moments of self doubt, times when you just think, 'Forget it!'" he admits. "But I have to say, I never really felt I was going to give up. There were calls to the heavens to solve situations, but at the same time I learned so much about telling a story and the whole grammar of cinema."

He also learned quickly about the realities of working with novice material. "In the end the editing told the story. The filming was pretty free, so in the editing room we had to say, 'Fuck it! We had this material – some of it we can call 'material', some of it self masturbation – and we had to be incredibly rigorous."

Perhaps it's his appreciation of the bigger picture that explains Bernal's casual attitude. He set up the production company Canana in 2005 with fellow actor Diego Luna as a way of harnessing the grass roots potential of Mexican filmmaking. Having spent much of his career in the company of master auteurs like Pedro Almodovar and Alejandro González Iñárritu, Canana could be a playground for Bernal to hone his skills to a similar standard, but don't mistake it for some self indulgent star's whimsy. "The main intention of starting Canana was just to build a hub for the creative energy around us, to congregate it into something," he explains. "So therefore Canana isn't only a means but an end. It's something I'm really glad about, it makes me feel like I have a home."

The idea that Bernal should find his home in the broader horizons of the film industry is a theme that recurs throughout his speech, although he's keen to assert that his new freedom as a producer comes with added responsibility. 'This is going to sound moral but it's like a parent saying, 'You can be responsible and still have sex' That's true, you can. But making a film is not about having *coitus interruptus* with a condom – it's about making the real thing."

The same candour that Bernal brings to his political crusades is clearly applied to discussing his own career. And it's his ease with the learning process that may prove to make his future choices so much more intriguing than those who get it spot on first time.

With the benefit of hindsight, *Deficit* could become one of Bernal's more interesting works. As a collection of ideas and thoughts it's an indication of where his new incarnation as a cinematic storyteller may take him. Given his reputation as a lovechild of revolutionary and artistic cultures, it should be worth the wait to see what the fruits of his labour will bear.

Whatever the final judgment of Bernal's directing debut, one thing is for sure – he's in no hurry to slow down. "The first film works only so that you do your second one. It provokes a strong sense of revenge – a feeling of just wanting to do things properly.' *Adria Caine*

Déficit *is out now on DVD*

TOM MCCARTHY

OH...THAT GUY!

Where some actors and directors light up a room, Tom McCarthy is a kind of flickering lightbulb. Despite the brilliance of his work – the quiet optimism of *The Station Agent* and the extraordinary depth of *The Visitor* – it seems he's destined for a low-key life. And why not? Here after all is an actor/director who excels in exploring the frayed connective tissue of society, where loners have to be dragged out of the shadows.

He's been getting it a lot recently – that puzzled double take of semi recognition on the promotional trail for *The Visitor* alongside his leading man Richard Jenkins. "Richard's kind of an, 'Oh, *that* guy!' too," he laughs, "so there'd be times in airports where people would do the double pump of, 'Oh, *that* guy's with *that* guy!' And they just couldn't place us. It was hilarious."

Fortunately, McCarthy doesn't need the oxygen of publicity to survive. He's happy for his work to speak for itself, and with two highly acclaimed directing gigs alongside acting roles with the likes of George Clooney, Tom Wilkinson and Sean Penn, his work doesn't so much speak as shout.

So how has he managed it? How did McCarthy carve a quietly stellar career while slipping under the radar? "I think because of the timing of my acting career and my directing career, the two have remained very separate," he explains. This has given him the time and space to hone his behind the camera craft without the crushing weight of expectation reserved for other recent converts like Ben Affleck, Helen Hunt and Gael Garcia Bernal.

McCarthy's total lack of ego also helps. You won't see him popping up in some scene stealing cameo in one of his own scripts. Although this, he says, is more about pragmatism than anything else. "I don't do it because I think it's too much for me personally," he says. "And besides, I get my acting fix in other films."

But it's his own film occupying him right now. *The Visitor* shares much of the same DNA as *The Station Agent*, a compelling and sensitive vision of a disordered world, but that doesn't mean McCarthy found it any easier second time around. "For a while there after *The Station Agent* I knew I should start writing again, but ultimately what was going on in the world was so discouraging to me – the state of our country, the invasion of Iraq, how divided we were after the second election – that I wasn't feeling the need or the passion to sit down and write a screenplay. The state of the world really just prevented me from getting to work."

There aren't many directors who are too sensitive for their own good, but after tinkering with the characters of an immigrant couple, McCarthy discovered the issue of America's detention centres, and knew he had his hook. "The more I experienced, the more people I talked to, the more detainees I spent time with, it was like, 'Wow!' For all the headlines and issues that are being discussed, how many of us have really experienced this? It was an awakening to what's going on around us."

The result is a film that doesn't linger on politics, but simply points to the fault lines in the Land of the Free. You get the feeling that McCarthy doesn't have it in him to be a polemicist, and that's nothing but a compliment in a filmmaking landscape defined by anger. "Ultimately I'm an optimist," he says. "I have a lot of belief in connection, especially human connection." *Matt Rochowicz*

Check out the full interview at www.littlewhitelies.co.uk.

NICE TO LIVE TH LIFE

GEORGIA GROOME

A LITTLE EXTRA SOMETHING

A baby-faced teenager plays a child prostitute in a gritty urban thriller that wows the critics and announces the arrival of a major new talent. Sounds like Jodie Foster. Sounds like *Taxi Driver*. But it isn't. The film is *London to Brighton*, and the actress was 14-year-old Georgia Groome.

But if comparisons to Foster are justified, why is it, when you meet her, that Groome evokes the spirit of an altogether more homegrown star? Why does she remind you of Victoria Wood? That's weird, right? It could just be the accent – Derby born and Nottingham raised, there's a touch of Brummy in Groome's voice that's both slightly funny and strangely beguiling. It gives everything she says a sense of unvarnished honesty that's far removed from the media-trained autopilot with which most young stars are equipped.

Or it could just be that the excitement in her voice and the twinkle in her eye are real. Because here is a girl, a young woman now, 16 years old, with the world at her feet and loving it. "I was sleeping at The Dutchess for a night," she giggles. "What is all that about?" There'll be no more Travelodges in the future for Miss Georgia Groome. Movie star. Headline star of *Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging*, a sure-fire smash that works almost entirely on the strength of her performance as put-upon teen Georgia Nicholson.

It's a long way from the doom and gloom of *London to Brighton*, as she's the first to admit. "There was barely two pennies to rub together for anything," she says of her trial by fire induction into the film world. "There were no dressing rooms, make-up, grooming, costume and tea and coffee took place in the same room in some dingy flat that they'd borrowed. There was a man called Ben who biked over to Sainsbury's to feed 50 for £15 with lentil soup."

Now she's a certified Teen Queen, surely it's all diva strops and ass-kissing? Not quite, she says, not yet, maybe never. "I always remember that you have to respect everybody that you meet," she says. "You have to remember where you came from."

When you've come from Derby, you're way too grounded to get all Lindsay Lohan, and sure enough, she says, "nobody's ever offered me any drugs." But there are other pressures in this business. At 16, Groome is on the cusp of maturity, at an age – how to put this delicately? – where some people might start to judge her on criteria quite apart from her acting. And yet Groome is no Britney, Spears, no blond teen empress likely to inspire websites to count the hours until she's "legal". How does she feel about being cast as the plucky Everygirl, when that's movie producer code for "you're not that fit"? "I'm really happy with who I am – I don't try to be anything that I'm not and I'm not wrapped up in the whole being somebody for the sake of having your photo taken," she says. "I am who I am. I'm just happy being normal."

And you know what? She should be. Normal might be boring, but calm? That's exciting. *Danny Scott*

There's more online at www.loadedmedia.co.uk

COMIC BOOK FILMS

LOOKING BACK AT THE FIRST COMIC BOOK MOVIE

COMIC GENIUS



As the BFI prepares a season to celebrate the history of the comic book film, the time is right to look to its future

Anyone even vaguely familiar with the graphic novel explosion of the '80s, and the mature, extraordinary work that came out of that period, will already understand that what was once seen as 'kids' stuff', or worse, the domain of geeks and freaks, is actually home to some of the greatest cultural work of the last century.

For the minority that still don't see it, pick up a copy of Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize winning *Maus*, or Alan Moore's revolutionary *Watchmen*. But if it's accepted that comic book writers and artists are conquering the Everest of creativity, where does this leave the comic book movie? Well, based on this year's releases, at the very heart of the mainstream film industry.

We no longer find it strange that one of the most keenly anticipated events of the summer, *The Dark Knight*, is a film based on a comic about a crime fighter who dresses as an overgrown bat. And then there's *Iron Man* – Marvel Studios' first self financed film, packed with stars and directed by the forever swinging Jon Favreau. Not only was this big business at the box office, grossing close to $100m on its opening weekend in the US alone, it also saw a number of marketing opportunities mercilessly hammered. Hasbro and Sega pushing merchandise, Audi, Burger King and LG enjoying lucrative product placement deals.

All of which leads to two common misconceptions. One, that comics have finally moved from the margins to the mainstream, with all the merchandising and marketing that involves, and two, that the rise of the comic book movie – and, indeed, Marvel Studios – means we're set for nothing but superhero shenanigans from here on in.

The reality of the situation is that comic books have always been a massive commercial success. Characters such as Batman and Superman were hugely popular from the off, with the latter selling millions of issues in the 1940s. They were never in the margins. Adam West's camp TV Batman was as big in the '60s as The Beatles and Bond. And as long as there's a buck to be made, the movie mainstream will always be interested, as evidenced by Christopher Reeve's turn as the Man of Steel in 1978.

Equally, the idea that *Iron Man*'s money spinning agreements are a modern phenomenon conveniently forgets the sheer hulk of merchandise that surrounded *Superman*'s '70s outing, or, indeed, the toys and sweets that the character shifted during the '40s. And then there's that acme of mainstream movie making/merchandising, '80s comic fodder turned cash register the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. This stuff is nothing new.

Where the idea of more marginal work becoming mainstream does have credence, however, is in the type of comic books now being adapted, for there is a welcome increase in the number of lesser known graphic novels hitting screens. This includes more personal stories, such as *American Splendor* or *Persepolis*, and a whole host of films that, due to their lack of spandex, often aren't even recognised as having come from the comic book world – the likes of *A History of Violence*, *30 Days Of Night* and *Road To Perdition*.

So, despite concerns that superheroes are gaining an unhealthy grip on the multiplex, what's actually happening is that a growing number of filmmakers are beginning to look beyond the obvious icons for inspiration. Directors and producers are tapping into previously unexplored parts of the comic book world, and a wider range of work is being chosen for adaptation. Increasingly diverse and challenging stories are being made into films, and it is we, the audience, who benefit.

And then, of course, there is technology. Huge advances in CGI have allowed ideas that once only worked in the pages of a comic book to be fully realised in film – movies such as *Sin City* or *300* (both from the pen of Frank Miller) could only have been made this side of the millennium. Whatever you may think about the worth of cinema as simulacra, such adaptations take us to new and exciting places, more than that, they suggest a new and exciting development in the relationship between the graphic novel and film industries. Leading figures from the comic book world, such as Miller himself, are now able to move across into filmmaking.

Where once there was misadventure. Miller burned by his experiences in Hollywood during the '80s – now there is cross pollination and collaboration. And this goes beyond just overseeing comic book movies. People from the comic book world are also being sought out to produce original material for the silver screen. J Michael Straczynski (who has worked on the likes of *Spiderman* and *The Fantastic Four*) penning the Clint Eastwood directed *Changeling*, for example, and when a comic book writer has work in contention for the main prize at Cannes, it's clear that we've moved beyond the point where superheroes are simply being called upon to save the box office. *Adrian Sandiford*

A film season of comic book movies will run at BFI Southbank and BFI Imax throughout July and August

www.bfi.org.uk/whatson

EXILES MAIN

The term 'underground film' is loaded with connotations of resistance and exile It signifies a style of filmmaking that does not express a personality but rather a sensibility – whether political, artistic, sexual or, as in most cases when looking at the key figures of underground film history, all three

This becomes problematic as underground filmmakers decide to move away from expressing a shared sensibility towards a more ego driven desire for a signatory style (at best) and mainstream recognition (at worst)

This tension was there at the beginning of underground film as a significant cultural movement in New York with the arrival of John Cassavetes' *Shadows* (1959) and Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie's *Pull My Daisy* (1959) This was the beginning of Beat Cinema, defined by the use of non or little known actors, a semi spontaneous form of expression and an implied critique of a mainstream culture that leaves its protagonists alternately amused and depressed

But Cassavetes later revised his cut of *Shadows*, leading influential underground filmmaker Jonas Mekas to write in his diary that he felt "betrayed" He attacked it in the *Village Voice*, claiming that the director had re edited the film for commercial reasons and that it had lost its spontaneity and significance Various figures of the underground film movement took sides, with film critic Parker Tyler writing an essay in favour literally called *For Shadows, Against Pull My Daisy*

If tension was there from the beginning, it was an inevitable consequence of cinema's cult of personality Personalities their ascendancy and the money to be made from them – are a large part of the mainstream and figured centrally in the next influential movement in underground filmmaking to follow Beat Cinema The Factory films made by Andy Warhol and Paul Morrissey between 1963 and 1968

These films did not reject the idea of personality or 'star quality' but instead embraced it with a serious irony The Factory films presented a series of alternative superstars Viva, Nico, Joe Dallesandro, Edie Sedgwick, Holly Woodlawn – in settings that were seedy or pathetic low rent apartments or cheap hotel rooms or the minimalist and starkly lit photographic set at The Factory studio

These were glamorous people in a contrasting context of anti glamour With minimal scripting and direction, static camera and a stylistic preference for letting scenes play out unmediated by flattering editing techniques, The Factory films held up a fractured mirror to Hollywood They commented ironically on the presentation of idealised personalities as various Factory stars try – sometimes touchingly – to hold on to their dignity while being betrayed by their surroundings, their vices (specifically heroin and pills) and their competing co stars

The Factory films established a number of defining aspects for underground film that were influential on key filmmakers



including George Kuchar (*Hold Me While I'm Naked*, 1966) and John Waters (*Pink Flamingos*, 1972), as well as the 'Cinema of Transgression' of the mid '80s spearheaded by Richard Kern, Nick Zedd, and Scott and Beth B. Firstly, underground film as an expression of a shared sensibility (defined culturally by the late '70s as 'punk' and by the early '80s as 'no wave'), one of resistance to and exile from both mainstream culture and mainstream filmmaking, and secondly, underground film as an exponent of shock value by transgressing perceived values of morality, normality or 'good taste'. The Factory films had casually set a standard of explicitness in films like *Blue Movie* (1969) (showing sex on screen) and *Trash* (1970) (heroin shooting) that the underground filmmakers who followed would be hard pressed to surpass.

The Cinema of Transgression at least attempted to do so by combining sex and drugs with elements of sexual politics – or political sex – often expressed though S&M and role play. Richard Kern and Nick Zedd used an agitprop for their films that was part Surrealist Manifesto and part New York Dolls press conference. The ethos of this movement, as expressed by Zedd in his *Cinema of Transgression Manifesto* (1985), appeared to be that freedom would be attained through a kind of creative and personal libertarianism. "We propose to go beyond all limits set or prescribed by taste, morality or any other traditional value system shackling the minds of men," he wrote. "The only hell is the hell of praying, obeying laws, and debasing yourself before authority figures, the only heaven is the heaven of sin, being rebellious, having fun, fucking, learning new things and breaking as many rules as you can. This act of courage is known as 'transgression'."

But another filmmaker of this movement, Cassandra Mele, stated in Jack Sargeant's book, *Deathtripping*, that as the spotlight fell more on the key players Zedd, Kern and underground film actress and writer Lydia Lunch – the idea of the movement as a form of self liberation got lost. "They got too much focus and talked too much as spokespeople, and it fell from there," she said. "It became a destructive force really, it became evil."

The key figures of underground film history may be New York based but their influence is international. There are annual underground film festivals in Chicago, Melbourne, Sydney, Calgary, Austin and Montreal. The legacy of shock value has dwindled as mainstream sensibilities have changed – Richard Kern is now a sought after erotic photographer and John Waters is a TV chat show regular.

But then underground films are the films most of us usually do not get to see. Perhaps a decade from now there will be a book to tell us about the films that would have shocked us today, if only we knew where to look. *Jay Clifton*

This is just the beginning. If you're a filmmaker with your ear to the underground and you've got something to say, let us know.

LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY

A NEW DOCUMENTARY: THE STORY OF A MUSICAL MAVERICK

HERE COMES THE UPSETTER



You may not be that familiar with the name Lee 'Scratch' Perry, but you will have heard his influence on music through his pioneering work with Bob Marley, reggae and dub. And you too may be inspired to start smoking copious amounts of ganja and running around with an electric fire strapped to your head after watching *The Upsetter*, a movie that offers living proof that riding on the edge of insanity has rarely offered such prolific rewards. For Lee 'Scratch' Perry, blurring the thin line between genius and crazy is what made him such a maverick, and let's face it, the myth wouldn't be the same if he was a straight talking, straight-up super-producer who 'creates' super clean sounds in a sterile studio somewhere in Stockholm. .

The Upsetter, Ethan Higbee and Adam Bhala Lough's documentary, is not just a fantastic journey through the life and times of Scratch, but a film about life in Jamaica, a film about mentoring Bob Marley, about the reggae music business, and one man's global influence.

Scratch was a country *bwai*, abandoned by his mother after his parents split up and left with his father, only to become little more than a slave around the house. He ran away, ending up working as a record boy for 'Coxone' Clement Dodd. He soon graduated to DJ and then writer/producer, having his first hit with *The Chicken Scratch*, which is where he got his name from.

He went on to become one of the world's true pioneers of music. In 1968 he set up the Upsetter label and released a serious amount of tunes without having a regular studio. In the early '70s he single handedly gave reggae its unique sound and then, with King Tubby, invented dub with his 1972 album *The Blackboard Jungle*. He then went on to invent the remix. In 1972 he built the Black Ark studio and had another prolific run of hits, writing and producing for a diverse range of talent from Bob Marley to The Clash, before burning the Black Ark to the ground in 1979.

Eventually, Scratch had enough of everyone continually taking from him (record label bosses stealing his music and money, and musicians like Bob Marley giving him a seriously hard time over cash that hadn't been paid due to record label skanking). "The way black people was treating me, how could I be one of them?" he asked. He decamped to Europe (Amsterdam, then London) and began working with Adrian Sherwood and Neil 'Mad Professor' Fraser, before settling in Switzerland, where he lives today. *LWLies* caught up with Adam Bhala Lough to see what's going down with *The Upsetter*.

LWLies What made you shoot the film?
Bhala Lough We were highly inspired to tell the story of the life and music of Lee 'Scratch' Perry in hope that future generations will know how much of a genius this man truly was and will understand the profound effect he had on modern music. The inspiration of Lee Perry and of Jah made us come together and shoot the film above all odds and difficulties.

LWLies How difficult was it getting it financed?
Bhala Lough Financing feature length documentaries is a difficult process. However, because of the strength of our past films [including graffiti doc *Bomb The System*] and the worldwide popularity of Lee Perry we were able to very quickly raise a small amount of capital to take us to Switzerland and interview him. The rest of the film was made on no budget, shot on our own equipment and edited in Ethan's bedroom.

LWLies What was the shoot like? How long did it take?
Bhala Lough The initial shoot lasted eight days in Switzerland at Lee Perry's home. He invited us into his home and we would interview him for hours at a time about his life and his music. Then he would take us around his home and around town where we would videotape him talking about anything he wanted and performing little skits for the camera. The subsequent shoots were much looser and consisted of us following him around the globe from city to city as he performed in concert. We had backstage access and even had access into his hotel room before and after shows. He took us into his world and we just kept the cameras rolling.

LWLies Where did you shoot it?
Bhala Lough The shooting took place in Zurich, Switzerland, London, San Francisco, New York City, at CBGB's, New Haven, Connecticut, and Colorado. Then in Jamaica at Sav la Mar, Negril, Montego Bay, and Kendal.

LWLies Has he really quit smoking weed?
Bhala Lough Yes, Lee Perry has completely stopped smoking weed, drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes and eating meat. He did this to become healthier so that at his advanced age [72] he can still tour around the globe and perform for his fans. *Kong Ma*

The Upsetter will be rocking film festivals all summer. www.theupsettermovie.com

DVDS

JEUNET & CARO COLLECTION
(1991 – 1995)
DIRS: JEAN-PIERRE JEUNET, MARC CARO
AVAILABLE: JULY 14

Cannibal butchers! Vegetarian terrorists! Grieving clowns! Performing fleas! The ensemble of characters inhabiting the rich and strange world of directing duo Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro reads like a vaudeville porter, and this collection of films invites you to take a ringside seat.

The pair began to collaborate after meeting at an animation festival in 1974, with Marc Caro's innovative visual flair finding a perfect partner in Jean-Pierre Jeunet's imaginative use of the camera. Arguably, the partnership reached its apotheosis in *Delicatessen*, a surreal tale of star-crossed lovers and small-town cannibalism that was a critical and commercial success when first released in 1991. The plot (ex-clown takes handyman's job in apartment building owned by butcher resorting to murderous ways to get his meat) is merely the backdrop to a smorgasbord of set pieces, each more ingenious than the last. One character's repeatedly foiled attempts to take her own life are comparable in sheer inventiveness to the *Bunny Suicide* cartoons, while the sequence in which some squeaky bed springs set the tempo for various activities throughout the building has been much copied – but never bettered.

The distinctive, heightened look of the film made its crew stars in their own right. They were reunited four years later on the set of *The City of Lost Children*, another big budget Grimm-like fairytale in which the henchmen of prematurely ageing scientist, Krank, raid a nearby harbour town for children so that he can steal their dreams. Jeunet's typically playful camerawork (which he went on to put to great use in *Amelie*) is much more absorbing than the flimsy narrative, however. In one of the opening shots the camera rapidly zooms out, up above the heads of an enraptured crowd, hitting the top of the test-of-strength machine at the fairground and illuminating the film's title. In another, we share the perspective of a jumping flea. Caro's futuristic/antiquated production design is perfectly reflected in Jean Rabasse's sets and Jean-Paul Gaultier's costumes, contributing to the overwhelming sense that you're leafing through the sketchbook of a twisted but prolific artist.

This box-set also includes the 1981 short *The Bunker of the Last Gunshots*, a claustrophobic (and largely unintelligible) account of a group of soldiers awaiting attack in an underground bunker. It will probably be of most interest to hardcore fans wishing to trace Jeunet and Caro's darkest, most surreal roots.

Littered with optical appendages, these films are obsessed with sight and hearing, and are certainly feasts for the eyes. At worst, they're great fodder for VJs on the lookout for vaguely related, highly stylised visuals. At best, they're the cinematic equivalent of clowning: breath-taking, jaw-dropping, death-defying high-wire acts of visual inventiveness which are both sinister and beautiful, funny and frightening, and which hold a mirror up to society and its darkest taboos. You pay your money, you takes your chances. Let the show begin. *Sally Shkreta*

THE BOSS OF IT ALL (2006)
DIR: LARS VON TRIER
AVAILABLE: NOW

For years, a duplicitous businessman (Peter Gantzler) has blamed all his company's problems on a fictitious owner, and now must hire a self-absorbed actor (Jens Albinus) to play 'the boss of it all' and fool six dysfunctional employees in search of an authority figure. Lars von Trier inflects his office comedy with the reflexivity of Luigi Pirandello, revelling in the inherent absurdity and theatricality of workplace politics. All the Danish maverick's trademark alienation-effects are here, as well as some new ones (Automavision, anyone?). Perhaps slighter than his other films, it's still every bit as corrosive, and very funny. *Aaron Bate*





PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK (1975)
DIR: PETER WEIR
AVAILABLE: JUNE 30

The real life mystery of a school party that disappeared from a picnic at Hanging Rock in turn of the century Australia becomes a dreamlike and highly atmospheric film in the hands of Peter Weir. It's a real mood piece: a creeping sense of fatalism and foreboding prevails in the early stages, before giving way to a kind of *Don't Look Now*-esque psychological horror. As the case remains unsolved, Weir focuses on evocation over explanation, and this tantalising film that uses a tragedy to lay bare the petty deceptions and cruelties beneath the surfaces of the world is all the better for it. This Deluxe Edition comes with a director's and original cut, a two hour documentary and much more. *Matt Bochenski*

A WALK INTO THE SEA: DANNY WILLIAMS AND THE WARHOL FACTORY (2007)
DIR: ESTHER ROBINSON
AVAILABLE: AUGUST 18

Esther Robinson's film explores the mysterious 1966 disappearance of her uncle, Danny Williams, Andy Warhol's sometime lover and favourite 'Harvard electrician' (Warhol's tag). Williams was the bright young thing behind the lighting design of early 'Exploding Plastic Inevitable' shows, and, it emerges, when he disappeared aged 26, he was not only an editor for the Maysles brothers but a promising filmmaker himself. Fascinating interviews with family and members of Warhol's inner circle are telling by their opacity. The resulting open-endedness befits the 'incomplete people', as John Cale describes them, that orbited Warhol's dark star. *Sophie Lyon*





THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY (2007)
DIR: JULIAN SCHNABEL
AVAILABLE: NOW

Is art at its most free when it is most constrained? Is true love revealed only in crisis? Can memory and imagination alone make life worth living? These are some of the questions raised by *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, whose claustrophobic POV shots make the viewer feel as 'locked in' as paralysed protagonist Jean-Dominique Bauby (Mathieu Amalric). Based on the real Bauby's laboriously composed memoirs, Schnabel's film eschews sentiment or cliché, while offering visuals so sumptuous you won't dare blink an eye. Extras include a talking director's commentary, and a surreally incoherent *60 Minutes* interview with Schnabel. *Aaron Bate*

MOUTH TO EAR

Writer-director Alison Murray went to the same high school as Ellen Page, but only met her while casting for her first feature film, *Mouth To Mouth*, in 2005. Funded by the Canadian-Armenian director Atom Egoyan, the festival hit and future cult classic is available right now on DVD

LWLies It's been a long time since you made *Mouth To Mouth*, why do you think it is being released now and did you have anything to do with it?
Murray This is its first UK release. It's taken a while for the film to build steam, but after winning best feature awards in several festivals, including the Brooklyn International Film Fest, interest grew enough to prompt the UK release. It came out in the US and Canada shortly after production in 2005.

LWLies *Mouth To Mouth* follows a group of naive activists misled by a power-mad leader. How autobiographical was the script?
Murray I did get involved with an activist group that turned out to be a cult – this was in Germany in the late '80s like in the film – but what happened to me was not as dramatic as the film.

LWLies Tell us about your background.
Murray I was actually born in Canada but moved to London when I was 15 and lived there for 18 years. I joined the group when I was 16. After that I studied dance and theatre, then picked up a camera. I am now floating about the globe, mainly between Toronto and Buenos Aires. And I also lived in Berlin for a while.

LWLies What do you think the film is saying about activist politics?
Murray It is saying there is a risk that activist groups end up recreating the same dynamics they seek to challenge. George Orwell said this best with *Animal Farm* though.

LWLies The press release says, 'Hot on the heels of the runaway success of *Juno*, bright young talent Ellen Page stars in award-winning, hard-hitting coming-of-age drama *Mouth To Mouth*.' Is that annoying, or are you glad that *Juno* is being used to promote your film?
Murray I'm pleased for Ellen that *Juno*'s been such a success and obviously it's good for my film too. We cast Ellen in *Mouth To Mouth* when she was 15 and a complete unknown. As it turned out, we are from the same small city in eastern Canada and I actually went to the same school.

LWLies Where did the budget come from and the international cast?
Murray The film was a German-UK co-production. We cast in Canada as well as in the UK and Germany as our executive producer was Canadian director Atom Egoyan.

LWLies What are you doing next? Something in Toronto where you're based now, right?
Murray I just finished a feature length documentary about fairground workers called *CARNY* [which has aired on More4]. *Georgie Hobbs*

THE BEST OF BRESSON

***A MAN ESCAPED* (1956)**
***LANCELOT DU LAC* (1974)**
***THE DEVIL, PROBABLY* (1977)**
DIR: ROBERT BRESSON
AVAILABLE: NOW

"What I am looking for," said Robert Bresson in 1950, "is not really expression through gesture, words, mimics, but expression through rhythm and a combination of images, through their position, their relation and their amount."

Bresson realised this aesthetic early on in his career. He had already honed the style by his fourth film, *A Man Escaped* (1956), the real-life story of a French Resistance fighter's escape from a POW camp during World War II, with intense close-ups on the mechanics of hands, feet, doors and weapons. Where traditionally we are eased into a movie with a wide establishing shot, Bresson instead expected his audience to work while watching – to catch up with the rhythm of the film.

Masterpiece that it is, in *A Man Escaped* you could dismiss this device as a one-off – a cute trick that simply works well in robbing the audience and engaging their empathy for the captive protagonist. Watch *Lancelot du Lac* (1974) – made nearly two decades later – and it's clear, however, that while the film's subject matter is markedly different ("following the dissolution of King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table after a failed quest to find the Holy Grail"), the way in which the director presents it is not. Again, we are dropped into the action (another close-up of a hand, this time holding a sword) and are expected to find our way from there.

With *Lancelot*, Bresson cuts everything to remove the emphasis on dialogue – long passages of which are spoken off-camera or obscured by the sound of a whinnying horse or clinking armour. Altman and Tarantino would go on to try a similar thing, neither would manage to achieve rhythmic filmmaking as well as Bresson himself. In *Lancelot*'s climactic scene (a jousting tournament between the knights) all we are given are close-ups – of the horses' legs, of a raised flag, of the crowd's reaction – and snatches of persuasive sound. For someone raised on CGI it's a baffling experience, but one that stays with you.

Bresson's penultimate film, *The Devil, Probably* (1977), is widely hailed as one of his best. Set in 70s Paris among the beatnik set, the film combines dialogue and rhythm, with the characters embarking on long, self-regarding monologues that distract from, rather than augment, Bresson's still and striking visuals. It's an interesting test of his theory, one that proves that, however complicated, the best of Bresson's films had a beat. *Barney Farmer*

4 MONTHS, 3 WEEKS AND 2 DAYS (2007)
DIR: CRISTIAN MUNGIU
AVAILABLE: NOW

The malignant oppression and stifling bureaucracy of Ceausescu's Romania permeates this acclaimed film, which took the Palme D'Or at Cannes in 2007. When a young student, the frail and somewhat incapable Gabita, becomes pregnant in a country where abortion is a crime, she is forced to turn to her roommate, Otilia, for help. Soon there is no turning back, and a backstreet abortion in a dingy hotel will test their friendship to breaking point. With beautiful yet understated cinematography [illegible] and [illegible] tautly harrowing drama is film making at its most compelling. *Nicholas Querée*





FRONTIÈRE(S) (2008)
DIR: XAVIER GENS
AVAILABLE: NOW

Bad things happen to bad people, or so says this cautionary tale. *Frontiere(s)* opens with riots in Paris and a gang of thieves on their way to Amsterdam. They stop off in a rundown hotel owned by a neo-Nazi family and suddenly the baddies seem as harmless as the little piglets that squeal throughout Gens' film. Men hanging by their feet from hooks in the roof, freezers full of dead bodies, a grandmother whose food spurts out of a tube in her neck – it's all a bit disturbing but strangely compelling. Don't bother trying to cover your eyes. *Audrey Ward*

BLACK, WHITE + GRAY: A PORTRAIT OF SAM WAGSTAFF + ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE (2007)
DIR: JAMES CRUMP
AVAILABLE: JUNE 30

American curator and collector Sam Wagstaff formed the lesser known half of an artistic and romantic pairing with photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. Patti Smith introduced the men and completes this triptych, her sensitive contribution providing the tempered 'gray' to the couple's monochromatic extremes. Despite being popularly unknown today, Wagstaff's intensely personal impetus as a collector, his passionate championing of photography as an art form and promotion of Minimalism, are singularly influential – as this film duly stresses. The human narrative is equally compelling, tracing Wagstaff's trajectory from his privileged yet sexually repressed upbringing in 1940s New York, to a '70s spent exploring the city's gay scene with the much younger Mapplethorpe, and finally his death from AIDS. *Sophie Ivan*





FIDO (2006)
DIR: ANDREW CURRIE
AVAILABLE: NOW

In an alternative early 1960s America where humans have contained a nationwide undead menace, a domesticated zombie (Billy Connolly) has a transformative effect on his adoptive family, making up for the inadequacies of the father Bill, to his unloved son Timmy and neglected wife Helen. *Fido* is a colourful Sirkian pastiche, parodying not just George A. Romero's entire zombie oeuvre, but Pasolini's 1968 *Teorema* and even *Lassie*. Enslaved and feared, the zombies stand in for African Americans while also satirising contemporary obsessions with home security. This is a truly refreshing take on several putrescent genres. *Anton Bitel*

LES VAMPIRES (1915)
DIR: LOUIS FEUILLADE
AVAILABLE: NOW

Louis Feuillade's *Les Vampires* is a European silent serial taking in 10 episodes. These centre on a notorious gang of criminals, 'The Vampires', and *Le Monde* journalist Philippe Guérande, who reports in the wake of the gang's crimes. His sidekick, Oscar Mazamette, provides a bit of comedy, while Irma Vep (an anagram of 'Vampire', geddit?) is the femme fatale. If you get your kicks from black and-white early French cinema, this is your chance to check out the work of one of the greats. Extras include a portrait of Feuillade and some of his silent short films. *Andrew Ward*





SEMI-PRO (2008)
DIR: KENT ALTERMAN
AVAILABLE: NOW

Will Ferrell proves once again that he's more hit and miss than a drive-by shooting in that formulaic sports comedy. *Semi-Pro* sees him resume his customary role as the self-indulgent buffoon, only this time in the guise of funk singer and wannabe baller Jackie Moon, trying to save his beleaguered basketball team from extinction. With the usual mix of schmaltz, idiotic yelping and over-spend in the costume department, the film embodies everything you have come to expect from 'A Will Ferrell Comedy' – everything except the occasional laugh. *Ed Andrews*

GÉRARD DEPARDIEU: SCREEN ICONS (1979 – 1994)
DIRS: BERTRAND BLIER, ALAIN CORNEAU, GÉRARD LAUZIER, YVES ANGELO
AVAILABLE: JULY 14

Quite possibly the ugliest man to have played a Hollywood romantic lead, Gérard Depardieu is a sign that the French film industry does things differently. An obvious talent, the Depardieu box set also demonstrates the actor's versatility. On offer is one of his early successes, *Buffet Froid* (1979), a black comedy which combines the crime thriller with a look at social alienation, and *Mon Père, Ce Héros* (1991), a poetic love story between a father and daughter, remade, also starring Depardieu, as *My Father, The Hero*. Following these two are the César sensations *Les Colonel Chabert* (1994) and *Tous Les Matins Du Monde* (1991)– both period dramas starring some of France's finest actors such as Fanny Ardent, Anne Brochet and Depardieu's son, Guillaume. Though it's too narrow a slice of his career to be truly indispensable (he's starred in over 150 films), it's a healthy reminder of how good ugly can be. *Graeme Allister*





I'M A CYBORG (2008)
DIR: PARK CHAN-WOOK
AVAILABLE: NOW

Picture a pastel coloured South Korean version of the mental institution in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*. Here, the young patients display idiosyncrasies ranging from a fondness for animals and their innards to a tendency to steal the characteristics of others. In the midst of this chaos is Young-goon (Lim Su-Jeong), a young woman who believes she is a cyborg. She refuses to eat, talks to the vending machine and licks batteries in a bid to get energised. Fellow patient, Il-sun (Rain) hatches a plan to convince her to eat and saves her in true, love-borne-out *Amélie*-style. *Andrew Ward*



WTC VIEW (2005)
DIR: BRIAN SLOAN
AVAILABLE: JULY 21

WTC View is not quite the melodrama you might expect. Wide-eyed camp icon Michael Urie (Marc from *Ugly Betty*), plays Eric, a gay, SoHo based photographer with a room going spare following 9/11. But Manhattan is freaked. While New Yorkers club together, non-dams and recent visitors hoping to make a life for themselves don't know if they should stay or go. And stressed Eric, nearing a mental breakdown after seeing the WTC fall and now facing eviction unless he fills his apartment, isn't exactly helping.

Eric's experience is based on that of writer-director Brian Sloan. Attempting to find a roommate in the middle of the disaster, he received several weird and wacky voicemails from house hunters that are replayed in the film to comic tragic effect. As part of Sloan's grieving process (he was afflicted by survivor guilt after seeing the towers fall), he transcribed the messages. They eventually formed the basis of his first full-length play, *WTC View*, which won tremendous support at the New York Fringe Festival in 2003 and was then bankrolled by a single investor and made into a film.

Speaking at a Q&A following the film's London preview, Sloan says: "You didn't have to ask about it, people just started talking, saying 'Where were you?' There was militant camaraderie, it was like going through therapy." Urie, who got his first big break in the play and was commuting from Queens before the planes hit, agrees. He watched the event on TV from his classroom at Juilliard. "New Yorkers aren't the friendliest of people but when we did the play, it felt like something everyone needed. It was a catharsis. But most of the people who have seen the film are people who were not there at the time and yet they still need catharsis. They still feel guilt. The film is saying it is hard for everyone that there is literally no way to prepare for something like this." *George Hobbs*



RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH: SCREEN ICONS (1947 – 1960)
DIR: RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH
AVAILABLE: JULY 14

It's hard not to feel a twinge of affection for Lord Richard Attenborough. Better known as dear old 'Dickie' he remains the elder statesman of British cinema. Now in his mid-eighties Attenborough is given the full nostalgia treatment in this five-disc collection. Comprising *Brighton Rock* (1947), *The Ship that Died of Shame* (1955), *The Man Upstairs* (1958), *Dunkirk* (1958) and *The Angry Silence* (1960), this box set homes in on those early days when Attenborough was more political reactionary than BFI endorsed Santa Claus lookalike.

The set kicks off with the still superb Graham Greene/Carol Reed collaboration *Brighton Rock*. Attenborough stars as Pinkie, a small time hoodlum getting all gangsta' down at the pier. Attenborough delivers a terrifying performance that proves *Jurassic Park* was not the only film where his immorality ruined a perfectly good day out at the fun fair. In *The Ship that Died of Shame*, Attenborough plays an ex-serviceman turned smuggler whose greed gets the better of his moral compass. The film, making its UK DVD premiere, wears its post-war morality with a rad and tired desperation. *The Man Upstairs* from 1958 sees him take the lead in a somewhat loose if intriguing remake of Marcel Carne's classic *Le Jour Se Leve*. *Dunkirk* thankfully finds Attenborough in much more gung-ho guise as a cowardly garage owner enlisted to help with the military evacuation of allied troops from Normandy. *The Angry Silence* from 1960, however, is the one genuine revelation in this set. Attenborough stars as a factory worker who refuses to strike with his fellow workers. Be it a left wing declaration or fervent right wing propaganda, he delivers a performance that makes you wish he'd spent less time making worthy directorial statements and more time acting his bloody socks off. *Craig Dreyer*



HEAVY METAL (1981)



DIRECTOR
GERALD POTTERTON

STARRING
JOHN CANDY
EUGENE LEVY
HAROLD RAMIS

BOX NOTABLES
'JUDAS PRIEST' TIPPEXED
ON THE INSIDE OF THE CASE

TAGLINE
'LOUDER AND NASTIER THAN EVER'

TRAILERS
SUDDEN HILL
TWO BULLETS FOR CHARLIE
RIDDLEMASTER 2: THE PUNCH LINE

CHERRYPICK
"... UNLESS YOU COUNT ALL THOSE TIMES I SOLD DOPE DISGUISED AS A NUN."

The sticklers among you may well quibble about the induction of 1981's *Heavy Metal* into the hallowed halls of rental Valhalla. Unavailable due to music licensing wrangles for the entire span of the '80s video bonanza, this animated portmanteau of egregious fantasy cliches and ludicrous lo-fi sci-fi nevertheless managed to remain in constant circulation thanks to the Underground Railroad of playground bartering. While your older brother was handing around a tattered copy of *A Clockwork Orange* that somebody's weird uncle brought back from a sex-tourism jaunt through the Benelux countries, you and your half-cocked chums were sneaking a peak at a well-thumbed copy of *Heavy Metal* raped off the telly during Channel 4's legendarily short-lived mid-'80s rock strand *Electric Banana*.

As an exercise in nakedly exploiting the sweaty peccadilloes of the teenage male, the film would appear at first glance to be a sure-fire winner: an adaptation of stories scripped from the ultra-violent French sex-comic *Métal Hurlant*, with a slew of metal anthems booming over the top is everything the adolescent boy could wish for. Although – looking back with adult eyes – that may not have been an entirely good thing. For what one remembers as a breast filled bloodbath of orgiastic mayhem set to the savage cacophony of Iron Maiden and the Sabbath is revealed to be a jarringly discontinuous parade of badly drawn cockamamie featuring heavy-set, matronly women riding tigers to the strains of art-rock also-rans Devo covering 'Working in a Goldmine', or Stevie Nicks wigging out over an impenetrable snippet of hamstrung space opera.

All these curiously pointless little episodes concern, to a greater or lesser degree, the controlling influence of the Loc-Nar, a manifestation of intergalactic evil that takes the bone-chilling form of a small, lime-green beach ball. The Loc-Nar proceeds to recount a variety of its vaguely fiendish and decidedly drab adventures that can all be neatly summed up with any permutation of the terms 'mutant zombies', 'thigh boots' and 'hulking warriors', rounded off with '...before forcing him to have sex with her'.

Written by the godless huckster that gifted the world *Space Jam*, and directed with all the finesse of a rhino stampede through a field hospital by Gerald 'Fatter Fatter' Potterton, *Heavy Metal* boasts the vocal talents of the cream of Toronto's unjustly celebrated Second City comedy troupe. But not even the golden-throated dexterity of the young John Candy, Eugene Levy and some luckless bastard consigned to navigate the choppy waters of life bearing the name of Rodger Bumpass can enliven a film with less going for it than O.J Simpson at a Klan rally.

Rumour has it that director David Fincher is slated to bring his own brand of inverted lunacy to an update of the material for a prospective 2010 release, by which time sex and music will undoubtedly be outlawed and the future will be a thing of the long distant past.

GENRE SPECIFIC

WEINSTEIN COWBOY

FEATURING

THE HEBREW HAMMER

KARTOPFELKOPFS

HEM HAYU ASARAH







The story of Exodus should give pause to anyone wondering why so few People of the Book figure in frontier mythology. Having bitched out the Pharaoh by calling down the wrath of the Man Upstairs, the Chosen People crossed the Sinai to the Promised Land. But it took them 40 years. Now, go to an atlas and look at the distance from Cairo to Jerusalem and you'll understand why the desert and the great plains hold little attraction for this determined but directionally-benighted people

Lone-star country singer Kinky Friedman was forever hollering his status as the only Jewish Cowboy – an easy mistake to make. For years, the nearest thing to a Jewish gunslinger was Wyatt Earp, a gentile buried in a Jewish cemetery in the San Francisco hinterland. And that was only because he got hitched to a Hebraic beauty in his autumn years.

But Kinky could have turned his gaze to *Cowboy*, the 1968 31-minute trailblazer of Hebrew cowpokin'. Taking Woody Allen's *What's Up Tiger Lilly* as their anaemic template, the jazz-bearded lab boys of UCLA's film department added judicious Yiddish dubbing to 1932's *Son of Oklahoma*. Originally, the movie was a straight-up revenge opera but here, cut down to its basics, the gunfighter hero is a talented Jewish boy, clearing his name and nailing the bad guy while weaving a tapestry of Yaddah-skits, in-jokes and innuendo. Probably. There are no subtitles.

It's almost an uncertainty that Robert Aldrich hadn't failed to see *Cowboy* when he made *The Frisco Kid*. Having incurred the wrath of the disability lobby with *Whatever Happened To Baby Jane*, upset the military-industrial complex with *Twilight's Last Gleaming*, and offended everybody with *The Dirty Dozen*, Aldrich was looking for a project that wouldn't rock the boat. What could be better than Han Solo as a gunfighter cussing his way across the West in the company of discomfited Polish rabbi Willy Wonker? In fact, Gene Wilder is the saving grace of what is essentially an over-long fart joke, interspersed with occasional whip-crack ethnic chuckles and moments when Harrison Ford appears to be channeling a proto Dr Jones. The result is a fleeting pleasure that suffers from the age-old problem afflicting the Jewish hero. It's what one critic of 2003's hebesploitation actioner, *The Hebrew Hammer*, bemoaned, that the humour hinged on the idea of a Jew being heroic – and not an aviator-wearing Israeli commando either, but a nebbishy *mittel*-European everyman. To get a real Jewish cowboy movie we need to head East, not West, to Palestine, in the footsteps of the frontiersmen of *Hem Hayu Asarah* (*They Were Ten*, 1960). While their brethren, fleeing pogrom and terror in Russia, cross an unwelcoming Europe and angry sea to America, Manyah, Yosef and their friends decide to make a new world on a dusty hill in 1880s Galilee. A testy Arab population stands in for the Injuns, at once hostile and mystified by the *Kartoffelkopfs*' attempts at creating a farming life. All the wagon train standards are present, from sheep rustling to soft-handed city folk breaking on the harsh soil of an unwelcoming land. It turns out the Jewish cowboy was there all along, we were just looking for him in the wrong place. Oi vey, Silver! *Paul Bardoogh*

SEE ALSO...

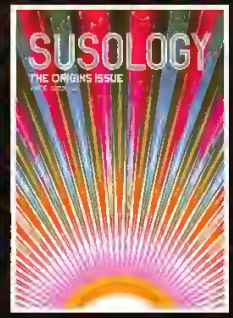
***BIRTH OF THE COMMUNITY; JEWS AND GOLD RUSH* (1994)**
***SONG OF A JEWISH COWBOY* (SHORT, 2002)**
***AN AMERICAN TAIL: FEIVEL GOES WEST* (1991)**



SUSOLOGY

THE STUOY OF IMAGINATION, CREATIVITY ANO OETERMINATION.
THREE LITTLE WOROS WITH THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLO.

Susology Magazine, The Origins Issue, released June 2008, featuring



> CHARLES BURNETT
> DETROIT TECHNO
> BRUCE WEBER
> BLEK LE RAT
> MARTHA COOPER
> LE GUN
> OEAN KARNAZES
> CHINESE SKATE
> IRANIAN RAP
ANO MUCH MORE BESIOES.

AND IT'S FREE. ALL YOU NEED TO PAY IS ATTENTION.

Subscribe at www.suso.co.uk or email us at iwantyou@susology.com

www.susology.com


CHAPTER
SIX
DON'T BELIEVE THE
HYPE
INCOMING MOVIES
LAID BARE

Incomings Cannes Special

After blogging our way through the Cannes Film Festival, we wanted to offer a more considered review of this year's carnage on the Croisette. Over the following pages, you'll find all the usual idiosyncratic opinions plus (in what will become an Incomings staple) a lengthy Q&A session with the movers and shakers behind one of the most hyped movies around. First up – *Terminator Salvation*. Enjoy.

Che. Dir. Steven Soderbergh

UPDATE

The best $65 million, two-part, four-and-a-half-hour anti-biopic you'll see in 2009. Or maybe you won't. Steven Soderbergh's breathtakingly uncommercial meditation on Che Guevara may never make it to cinemas in present form. Which would be an enormous shame because it's a bold, fascinating, consummately crafted battle-drama that demands to be swallowed whole and in one sitting. Shooting with new lightweight digital cameras, Soderbergh thrusts us into Che's (an enigmatic Benicio Del Toro) guerrilla wars in the jungle, through the streets and on the political podium. Told through sad silences and thumping combat scenes, it's a rare cinematic event worth fighting to see in its long form. **ETA: January 2009**

Surveillance. Dir. Jennifer Chambers Lynch

UPDATE

Jennifer Chambers Lynch's film offers a chance to see what McLovin's slacker cops might have ended up like if David Lynch had directed *Superbad*. Fifteen years after being torn apart for *Boxing Helena*, Lynch proves that she's definitely her father's daughter with this eminently, well, Lynchian psycho-thriller. Black comedy, off-kilter performances, chilling sound design, jolts of violence – it's all here as FBI agents Bill Pullman and Julia Ormond interrogate a cop, a junkie and a little girl; survivors of a mysterious roadside massacre in backwater, USA. It's Lynch-lite and there's no torque in the final twist, but it's a dark, minor pleasure nonetheless. **ETA: Late 2008**

Of Time And The City. Dir. Terence Davies

NEW

Distant Voices, Still Lives director Terence Davies' fifth full feature in two decades comes fully eight years after his last film, *House Of Mirth*. *Of Time And The City*, a deeply personal cine-essay on the post-war Liverpool of his '50s childhood, is fully worth the wait. Clocking in at just 77 minutes, Davies' documentary is a freewheeling collage spilling off his brainpan. Whisking archive images, fresh footage, music and the filmmaker's own mellifluous voiceover narration, it's terrifically amusing, not to mention full of charm and bite. **ETA: October 2008**





Synecdoche, New York.

Dir Charlie Kaufman

UPDATE

Synecdoche Syn-ec-do-che Sin-neck-doh-key As hard as it is to pronounce Charlie Kaufman's brain-melting directorial debut, it's a doddle compared to grappling with the film itself Like all Kaufman's post-modern hoopla, it's really a delicate, sad, beautiful story about art, love, loss and life Philip Seymour Hoffman is superb as CK's alter ego, an angsty theatre director who tries to unlock his own inner meaning by creating an epic play of his own life As reality blurs into a theatrical mirror-world, Kaufman's wit, ideas and invention glitter like jewels – before being smothered by the dizzying layers of his own meta-cleverness Bring headache tablets **ETR 2009**

Tôkyô!

Dirs Michel Gondry Joon-ho Bong Leos Carax

UPDATE

An agoraphobic who falls in love with his pizza delivery girl and faces an earthquake A filmmaker's girlfriend who transforms into a wooden chair And *merde* Michel Gondry, Joon-ho Bong and Leos Carax lay on a hugely enjoyable triptych about Japan's megalopolis capital city Making the biggest impression on us in the French Riviera was Carax's bizarre, irresistible satire that sees a bearded, gibbering degenerate clamber from the sewers to eat flowers, throw grenades and wreak havoc on the city Godzilla has nothing on this guy **ETR Autumn 2008**

Hunger.

Dir Steve McQueen

NEW

Turner Prize-winning Brit artist Steve McQueen's gripping drama, *Hunger*, was Cannes 2008's most gruelling movie Zeroing in on imprisoned IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands, it sees Michael Fassbender emaciate himself into a skeletal horror show and religious martyr Look out for McQueen's real coup the 20-minute single-take conversation between Fassbender and prison priest Liam Cunningham **ETR Late 2008**

The Class.

Dir Laurent Cantet

NEW

Up there with *Être et Avoir* as one of the most realistic high-school movies ever made, Laurent Cantet's Palme d'Or winner grabs François Begaudeau's autobiography about his experiences as a high-school teacher, casts Bégaudeau as himself, then locks him in a classroom of school kids played by school kids It works playful, bristling banter between students and teacher bounces off the walls, allowing Cantet to capture a subtle, engrossing social microcosm, full of gripping emotions, sharp observations and delightful humour It's also your best chance to learn how to call someone a 'skank' in French **ETR Early 2009**

Gomorra.

Dir Matteo Garrone

NEW

They're the criminal empire that's killed 4,000 people in the last 30 years They control everything from fashion to drugs to waste-disposal They're also funding the reconstruction of the World Trade Center This expose of Italy's infamous organised crime network, the Camorra is a raw, concussive departure from *GoodFellas* and *The Godfather* It's a forceful, epic vision of a country locked in a violent chokehold – from the grimy urban streets to the highest economic byways – that cross-cuts five separate storylines with concussive up-close realism, raw violence and dense detail An intelligent, engrossing saga **ETR Late 2008**

Delta.

Dir Kornél Mundruczó

NEW

One of our favourites Hungarian Kornél Mundruczo's serene tale sees a young man returning to his homeland in the Delta, a series of labyrinthine waterways He meets a sister he never knew existed and the two are drawn into a story of love and tragedy They begin to build a secluded house to live in, but unbeknownst to them the locals have decided that their behaviour is intolerable It's no surprise to see Béla Tarr listed as script consultant **ETR TBC**

Waltz With Bashir. Dir Ari Folman

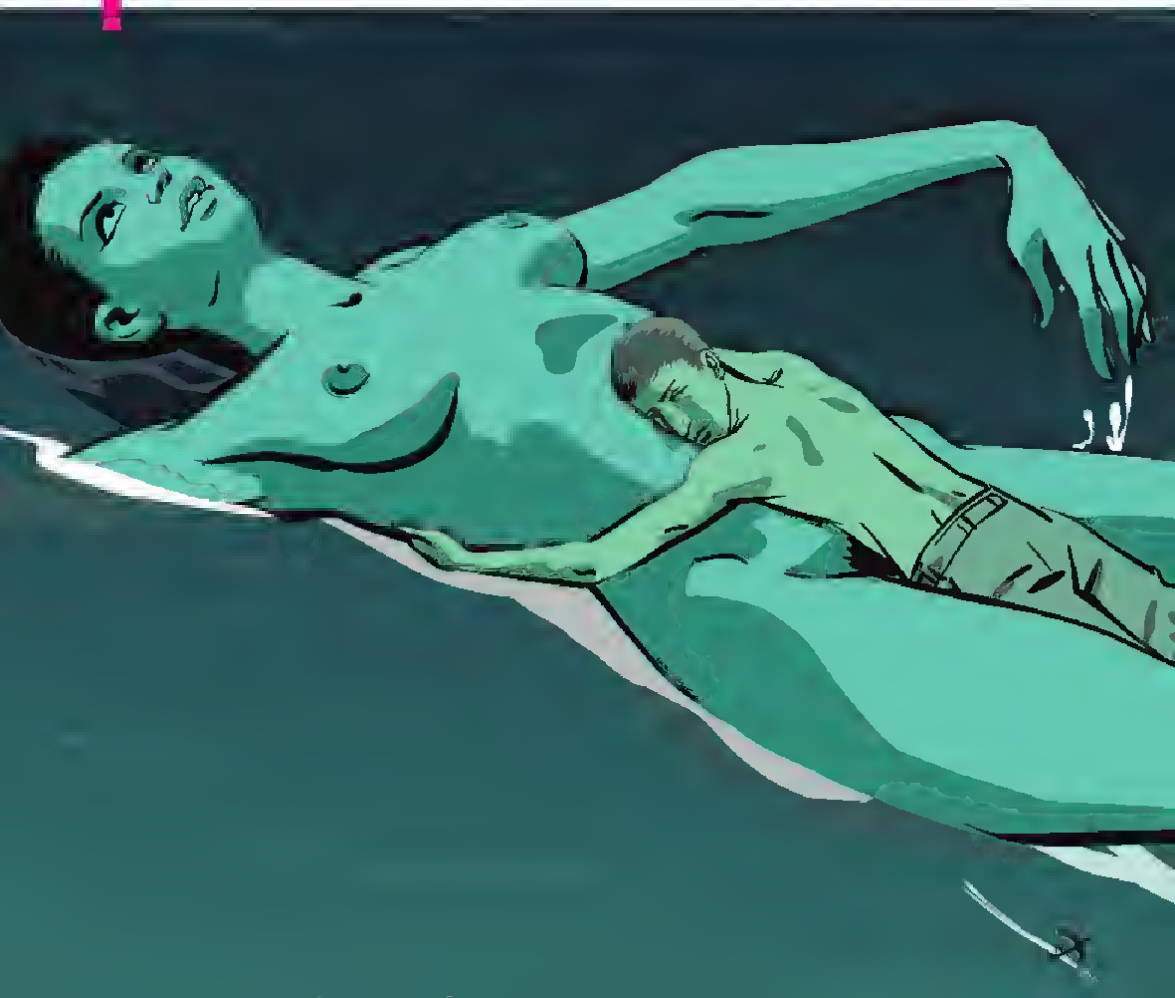
NEW

Memories, dreams and nightmares collide in this remarkable Israeli animated documentary, as filmmaker Art Folman and other combat veterans dig up repressed total-recall of what they saw and did during Israel's early-'80s war with Lebanon. Folman was a young draftee at the time but can't (or won't) remember the genocidal massacres of Palestinian civilians that he knows he witnessed. Mixing vivid graphic-novel adventures with documentary footage, it's a haunting vision that comes loaded with a devastating pay-off. Already bolted in as one of next year's best. **ETA 2009**

Tyson. Dir James Toback

NEW

The other *Iron Man* is a naked, brutally frank on-screen confessional from the pigeon-loving street kid who became boxing's youngest ever undisputed heavyweight champion at the age of 20. Fearlessly ripping himself open – at times, he's left choking on words and tears – 'Iron' Mike mulls over the last 40 years of life: bullied childhood, criminal career, pugilistic passions, splintered emotions, lost father figures, sexual hunger, bad choices, worse friends, that rape charge... This is Tyson's story – not the big picture – but a devastatingly honest, straight-to-camera catharsis. James Toback's documentary packs an emotional wallop that's simply impossible to dodge. **ETA TBC**



The Silence Of Lorna.

Dirs. Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne

NEW

The Dardenne brothers kept their perfect record intact by again leaving the Croisette with a prize. This time it was Best Actress for Arta Dobroshi's turn as an Albanian twenty-something married to a junkie to gain Belgian citizenship. As in all the Dardennes' subtle, skilful dramas, things don't go to plan, however. Is it up there with Palme d'Or winners *Rosetta* and *L'Enfant*? Not quite, but this delicate drama still touches places other films don't even know exist. **ETA October 2008**

Serbis.

Dir. Brillante Mendoza

NEW

Some called it '*Cinema Pornadiso*'. Well, we did actually, in our Cannes blog. But Filipino filmmaker Brillante Mendoza's snapshot of a family coping with daily life in a poverty-hit porn theatre has little to do with the graphic exchanges of the local rent boys. Workshopped for months and shot in a few days, Mendoza's drama dodges any real plot to achieve the breathtaking realism that's become his trademark. Boxed in by the constant roar of traffic outside, the film's most vivid personality is finally the sweaty, crumbling theatre itself – a subtle, potent metaphor for its inhabitants and the entire country. **ETA TBC**





UPDATE

Terminator: Salvation.

Dir McG

Cannes isn't just a Mecca for film screenings; it's a hive of gossip and rumour. In an attempt to sort one from the other, we met up with The Halcyon Company's Victor Kubicek and Derek Anderson, producers of *Terminator 4* (and 5 and 6), to find out what's going on and, most importantly, if you-know-who will be back. **ETA Summer 2009**

LWLiss: Why is the film being directed by the man behind *Cherlie's Angels*?
Kubicek: Obviously you have to look at somebody's experience and where they've been. But we all grow up and we all evolve. We didn't hire McG based on past work. He just had such a particular vision and love for the franchise. If we'd met him for something else, we may not have hired him.

LWLies: Whet wes thet vision?
Kubicek: An amazing story and real development of the characters, but at the same time making it huge and explosive and visually unexpected. He stood up and talked about his vision for the movie and it was so compelling that it made the hairs stand up on my neck. And now we keep seeing the dailies and it keeps getting better and better.
Anderson: Without getting into the plot, it's hard to tell you what happened. But it was one of those moments. He's really pushing himself. Even after just three weeks, we're so excited about what we're seeing already.

LWLies: How large ere you geing on the visuel effects?
Anderson: Revolutionary special effects are sort of the *Terminator* signature. Of course, we're going to uphold that to the full extent.
Kubicek: Look at *T2*. In terms of setting the bar again, that's what we want to do with *Terminator: Salvation*. We've got Charlie Gibson, who's the Academy Award-winning genius behind the effects you see in *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and Stan Winston is on board too.

LWLies: There wes e very humen heert beeting in Cemeron's two *Termine*tor films. Are you keen to heng on to this?
Kubicek: I think the fact we have Christian Bale speaks volumes to how committed we are to make this a really human story with rich, fully developed characters.

LWLies: Hes James Cameron been involved at ell?
Kubicek: James called McG and said, 'You gotta see Sam Worthington for this film.' He's this Australian actor who's the star of James Cameron's *Avatar*. He was amazing, so we cast him.
Anderson: It's definitely been nice to feel that James has been keeping an eye on us.

LWLies: Whet's the story?
Kubicek: It's set in the future and it's the first in the next trilogy. We're going to get to know who John Connor is, which is going to be really exciting for people.

LWLies: Was it hard to get Christisn Bals?
Kubicek: He was our first choice and we sent him the script and he said 'yes' immediately. So that was it.
Anderson: The sentiment was he'd just done *Batman* so a franchise this large would be daunting for him, but he read the script and he came on board immediately.

LWLies: How has Bale approached the rols?
Kubicek: Because it's Christian, he totally immerses himself in a new role and transforms himself and this will be no exception.

LWLies: Meaning?
Kubicek: You wouldn't want to mess with John Connor, that's for sure. He's in amazing shape. And he's committed to the trilogy – the full three films. For him, like everybody, it's not just a role or a job. It's, 'Oh my God, we're making *Terminator*.'

LWLies: How about the Terminstors? Will Arnie be back? Is Josh Brolin playing one?
Kubicek: We can't comment on that. I know, I'm sorry.

THE WORLD FAMOUS ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES PRESENT

release the bats



SHELLAC + PISSED JEANS
WOODEN SHJIPS + OM DJ ANDY WEATHERALL

Come dressed spooky or do something in the with one of the bands!

LONDON + THE FORUM + OCT. 31

Tickets available from ... www.wegottickets.com

THE WORLD FAMOUS
ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES
PROUDLY PRESENTS

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS 2008

CURATED BY
MELVINS
&
MIKE PATTON

DECEMBER 5|6|7 2008

BUTLINS HOLIDAY CENTRE, MINEHEAD.

ISIS / NE

[CHECK WWW.ATPFESTIVAL. ITIONS AND EVENT UPDATES]

the BigChill eastnor 2008

1st — 3rd August
Eastnor Castle
Herefordshire

www.bigchill.net

MEDIA MIX TENT

Bomb The Bass AV set
Cornelius AV set
Dance for Camera
Swerve Dance
Animat rescore Tuvalu
Minima AV rescore

CLUB TENT

DJ Krush live
Joaquin 'Joe' Claussell
Flying Lotus live
Asian Dub Foundation Sound System
Âme
Roots Manuva & DJ MK
Joe Hot Chip plays Hip Hop DJ set

The Mighty Boosh
Leonard Cohen
Trentemøller Live
Thievery Corporation

Róisín Murphy
African Head Charge
Camille
Beth Orton
Frightened Rabbit
Little Dragon
The Imagined Village
Blk Jks
Jon Hopkins
John Shuttleworth
Tom Middleton
Buzzcocks
Martha Wainwright
Lykke Li
David Holmes DJ set

WITH THANKS TO THE ICA
"Action Dub Painting" with Adrian Sherwood and Lee "Scratch" Perry (auction proceeds to Amnesty International)
Jeffrey Lewis
Lustfaust
Douglas Fishbone
Aileen Campbell

HALLOWEEN SOCIETY LIVE MEDIA MIX
Velvet Underground tribute with Jeremy Warmsley
Blood Stereo Horror mash up with visuals by Ben Rivers

BARS

Ursula 1000
ASkillz
Benga
The Unabombers
Don Letts
Diskjokke

WITH THANKS TO BFI SOUTHBANK
Big Chill BUG with Adam Buxton (Adam and Joe Show)
Exceeda: Platform X
Noise of Art in Space
The Light Surgeons: True Fiction

Comedy from Underbelly, Words in Motion with The Independent and Apples and Snakes, first class entertainment for kids and young people in association with the Roundhouse, Victorian Fair, Body & Soul (book your treatment now), The Big Warm Bonfire and pyrotechnic show, Moonlit Picture House, Art Trail, Sunday Silly Sports Day with Eddie the Eegle, Camp Site Cafes, top notch food and craft stalls and the Sunrise Celebration Festival Field 2008



Partnerships with... The ICA, Underbelly, Roundhouse, BFI Southbank, Amnesty International, The Independent.

Sunrise Celebrations

ICA

UNDERBELLY

ROUNDHOUSE

BFI

THE INDEPENDENT